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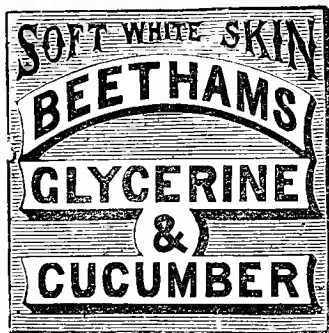
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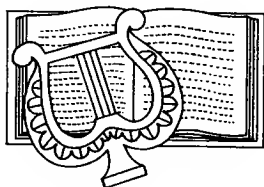
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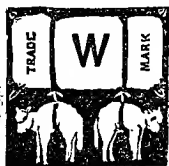
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# REGIMENTAL LEGENDS

BY J. S. WINTER

AUTHOR OF "CAVALRY LIFE"



*A NEW EDITION*

London

CHATTO AND WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1888



## P R E F A C E.

AGAIN, my gentle readers, I put before you a book of soldiers, emboldened to do so by the very kindly and gracious reception given to "Cavalry Life;" and introducing to you these fair women and brave men, I may perhaps be allowed to say a word to the reviewers of my first book.

Some of these gentlemen pointed out to me—very good-naturedly, I must say, with two exceptions—that there had been other writers on soldiering before myself, and that it was no small piece of assumption on my part to declare myself the first and only writer of real soldiers as they live and have their being.

They were quite right—as my friend, whom I always consult, puts it: "It would have been a piece of confounded cheek on your part, Winter, my boy, if you had intended to convey any such impression." Such an impression I had, however, not the smallest intention of giving to my readers. When I wrote the introductory article to "Cavalry Life," I was thinking and speaking of a class of writers whose number is large, whose soldier-heroes never could or



will exist on the face of this earth, and whose names are *not* Lever, nor Lockhart, nor Jephson, nor anyone else who can draw soldiers after their fashion.

Do then, my kind critics, accept my disclaimer, and give my new set of soldiers—you will find some old faces among them—as good characters as you gave my last. That they may have the good fortune to be of interest to all who make their acquaintance in these pages, is the earnest desire of their author.

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## REGIMENTAL LEGENDS.

### *UNDER THE CROWN: AN INCIDENT OF A RAILWAY JOURNEY.*

"YES," said Mrs. Bob Sabretasche, "I admit it ; I *do* pride myself on being a judge of character. No, I am not clever—I never pretend it for a moment ; and I detest blue-stockings—their clothes never fit like anyone else's, and they are always so dictatorial and disagreeable. No, I don't pretend to be clever in any way. I'm a wretched manager, and whatever I should do without Jinks and his wife I don't like to think ; but character I am a judge of—an unfailing judge. I never make mistakes. I can tell you a man's profession the very moment I look at him. No, it is *not* cleverness. I don't pretend it for a moment. It is a gift—the only gift I have."

"And you never make mistakes, Mrs. Bob ?" some one asked.

"Oh, never. Take my marriage, for instance. I actually ran away to Bob, and asked him to marry me."

"I beg your pardon, Lily," said Bob, "you did nothing of the kind—nothing half so business-like."

"Well, not in words perhaps, dear," she admitted, "but in reality. My instincts led me right, too : for I got the best husband in the whole world."

"Come, draw it mild, Lily." Bob expostulated, reddening a little.

Mrs. Bob laughed merrily.

"Bob can't bear to hear me praise him," she said, in an undertone, to her neighbour. "But it's true, for all that. He's the very best husband in the world."

"Then he is well matched," returned the gentleman gallantly—and he said it as if he meant it, causing little Mrs. Bob to flush up with pleasure, though she was twenty-three years old and had a nursery full of babies at home.

Well, not many days after this conversation took place, Bob Sabretasche suggested to his wife that they should run up to town for a few days. Bob's will and pleasure being Mrs. Bob's law, she ordered her boxes to be packed, commended her babies to the care of Mrs. Jinks, and to town they went. Town was full—the weather was fine—town was charming, and altogether Bob and his wife had what the Americans call a good time of it, so that it was with regret that they took their places in the train for the North, notwithstanding that the nursery full of babies awaited them at the end of the journey, like a bright galaxy of stars: they really were lovely babies, all of them, with their mother's big, black, velvet-like eyes set in their father's handsome, regular face.

As soon as they were off, Bob settled down to the *Times*; and Mrs. Bob, after her wont, proceeded to scrutinize her fellow-passengers. As she sat next to Bob, who in his turn sat next to the door, facing the engine, she was in an excellent position for doing so.

Besides herself and Bob, there were four persons in the carriage; at her right hand sat an old gentleman—a very nasty old gentleman indeed. He made Mrs. Bob think of a verse she had once read:

"By the side of a murmuring stream  
An elderly gentleman sat;  
On the top of his head was his wig,  
On the top of his wig was his hat."

It was a wig, crowned by a florid and hideous smoking-cap. He was very fat, so fat that he wobbled like a jelly

—not a stiff jelly by any means. Mrs. Bob described him at once, in her own mind, as a London alderman, and thought pityingly of turtle-soup and green fat; true, she had never seen one of those dignitaries in the flesh that she knew of, and the old gentleman was no more an alderman than I, the writer of this story; but then, as he was just Mrs. Bob's ideal of one, he therefore became an instance of those who have greatness thrust upon them.

Opposite to him, and to Mrs. Bob herself, were two ladies—tall, thin, severe-looking, not to say vinegarish, of aspect. Mrs. Bob decided their walk of life with as little hesitation and as much accuracy as she had decided that of the old gentleman: they were schoolmistresses in a swell way of business, “principals of an educational establishment.” Oh, how she pitied the poor girls in their charge—I very much fear Mrs. Bob thought “*clutches*”—from the bottom of her kind and gentle heart! As a matter of fact, they were not in the educational line at all, but ladies of title—maiden, it is true—and social stars of great magnitude in their own neighbourhood. However, as Mrs. Bob did not know that, and probably would not have admired them any more if she had known it, she turned from them to look at the remaining occupant of the carriage. He was much more agreeable to contemplate: his profession did not need half an eye to discover—a clergyman; a clergyman of the Established Church, elderly, grey-haired, benevolent of aspect, and very gentle and kind-looking—“a dear old darling,” said Mrs. Bob within herself.

Just as she glanced at him he bent slightly towards her, and asked if she would mind having the window a little open?

“Not the very least in the world,” she answered graciously. “In fact, I *like* it open, if it is not *very* cold weather.”

Very soon they slipped into conversation, and little Mrs. Bob was charmed by him—he was so polite, so courtly, so very pleasant. He offered her the *Graphic* and the *Illustrated*,



which Mrs. Bob accepted, and glanced over. Bob, who had thrust those very papers into his bag half an hour before, grinned to himself under his moustaches and let them remain there. Then, the papers being exhausted, Mrs. Bob and the old parson fell back upon conversation, and very nicely did their conversation flourish. They talked about all manner of things, and when the two old ladies and the fat old gentleman got out, which they did at Peterborough and Grantham, he became a good deal more amusing, and made Mrs. Bob laugh so much that they quite glided into a mild flirtation.

As for Bob, he was unusually quiet, and Bob was not a great talker at any time. Once, indeed, so silent was he that his wife asked him if he had a headache; but he answered in the negative, and added that the story he was reading was particularly interesting. So he read his book most of the way, and only joined enough in the conversation not to look sulky.

"Twenty minutes more," said Mrs. Bob, looking at her watch, "and we shall be at York: we change at York for Lilliminster."

"You go to Lilliminster?" said the old parson.

"Yes; my husband's regiment is quartered there," she replied.

"Ah, I go a different way—on to Carlisle," he said.

"Oh, you live at Carlisle?" In truth, the little woman was longing to know where he did live, and what was his name, but did not quite like to put the questions plainly.

"Oh no! I live in London," he answered. "I am going to Carlisle for a couple of days on a matter of business."

At this point Bob exploded—a smothered little snigger of a laugh, just loud enough for Mrs. Bob to hear, make her turn her big eyes upon him and ask:

"Why are you laughing, Bob?"

"Oh, this story is awfully amusing," he answered promptly. As it happened, that portion of the story just

before him described a heart-broken parting between a pair of heart-broken lovers.

However, satisfied by the reply, Mrs. Bob turned again to their fellow-traveller.

"Oh, I thought your living might be at Carlisle," she said.

"My *living* !" he repeated in a puzzled tone, which set Bob off laughing again. "My *living*, my dear lady ! I am not a clergyman."

"Oh, are you not ?" in crest-fallen tones. "I made *sure* you were."

"The fact is," struck in Bob, "my wife considers herself a great judge of character and physiognomy and all that—says she has only to look at a man to tell his business at once."

"My dear madam," said the old gentleman in a very kind tone, "I am afraid for once you are at fault. I am not a clergyman, I assure you. I hold a public office under the Crown."

"Really now. Well, I *quite* thought you were a clergyman. How one may be mistaken !" she said in the pretty, childish way which seemed to attract everyone, and wondering what Bob could be laughing at. "Oh, here we are at York."

The old gentleman was very kind still : their train left in ten minutes, and he helped to carry some of her numerous parcels across the platform. Presently, when Bob brought his wife back from the refreshment-room, he helped her into the carriage.

"Good-bye," she said, holding out her hand to him. "You have been very kind to me ; we have enjoyed your society very much. I hope we may meet again some day."

He took her hand as if it had been some fair and lovely thing, too sacred for common touch.

"A great many people say good-bye to me," he said, rather wistfully ; "but they don't say they hope to meet me again." Then the train moved ; the old gentleman

lifted his hat, Bob followed suit; Mrs. Bob smiled and waved her hand, and they had parted, the chance acquaintances of a few hours.

"I wish he had told us his name," she said regretfully.

Bob slipped his arm round her waist.

"Lily, my child," he said gravely, but with laughter in his eyes, "you don't know who he was?"

"No, Bob," wonderingly; "do you?"

"I saw him once. As he told you, he holds a public office under the Crown, and his name is Cal——;" but little Mrs. Bob uttered such a scream that the remainder of the word was lost, and Bob laughed too immoderately to repeat it.

For a few minutes she was utterly dismayed; then she pulled herself together and said she didn't believe it—but it was true, for all that.

---

## *THE COST OF A LIE.*

### CHAPTER I.

‘I SAY, Dickson.’

“Yes, old chap ; what is it ?”

“Laurie’s a good fellow, ain’t he ?” with a great sigh.

“Yes, very. What are you sighing about ?” As he spoke, Dickson hauled himself up from the depths of a big chair of basket-work, and went over to the side of the couch, from which Eliot Cardella could not lift himself. “What’s the matter ?” he asked. “Are you feeling worse ?”

Dickson and Cardella, with Laurie and Gore, were sharing one of the largest bungalows in Khotah, and Cardella was slowly—very slowly—recovering from a severe attack of the much-dreaded Peshawur fever, to which he had fallen a victim on the march from Caubool, where the Cuirassiers had been quartered nearly a year, and whence they had but a few weeks before returned. There had been many and awful changes in the regiment : there were many blanks in the roll now—many familiar faces missing ; many had inherited a freehold “six feet by three” in the land of their enemies, and lay sleeping their last sleep as soundly under Afghan jasmine and orange-blossoms, as if under English turf and daisies. The Colonel—our old friend Creyke, with a real V.C. after his name now—had gone up to the Murree Hills, with an empty sleeve and a frame reduced by fever to the lowest state at which a man could still live ; several officers had gone home invalided, but of

the four then living together, three had passed through the campaign unscathed, Cardella only being so unfortunate as to catch fever at Peshawur, on the return march to India.

That Laurie ailed nothing, you could easily have believed, had you been in that huge shaded room, with its high white walls and ever-moving punkah, for he was smoking in the veranda at that moment, swaying himself idly to and fro in a big American rocking-chair and singing softly, with a mellow tenor voice, a poor little Christy melody, valueless as a musical composition and utterly worthless as a poem, yet a thing that had caught his fancy, perhaps because it reminded him of a pleasant Queen Anne house, buried among cherry and apple orchards, six thousand long weary miles away from where he was sitting.

“Way down upon de Swanee ribber,  
Far, far away,  
Dere’s wha my heart is turning ebber,  
Dere’s wha de ole folks stay.  
All up and down de whole creation  
Sadly I roam,  
Still longing for de ole plantation,  
And for de ole folks at home.

“All round de little farm I wander’d  
When I was young,  
Den many happy days I squander’d,  
Many de songs I sung,  
When I was playing wid my brudder,  
Happy was I;  
Oh, take me to my kind ole mudder,  
Dere let me live and die.”

“What’s the matter?” asked Dickson, who had not taken much notice of the singer or his song. “Why are you sighing like that, old fellow?”

“I wish to heaven he wouldn’t sing. I *can’t* stand it,” Eliot burst out fretfully.

“‘All de world am sad and weary,’” sang Laurie, very much *con espressione*, whereat Dickson strode out into the veranda and unceremoniously shook the rocking-chair and its occupant up—bringing Laurie back from his dreams of

English cherry and apple orchards to a realization of things present and Indian.

"Stop that, old chap," said Dickson authoritatively.

"What the devil's up?" Laurie asked, looking up at his comrade with astonished eyes.

"Cardella can't stand your yowling," Dickson answered. "I wish you would try to remember there's a sick man within hearing—you know he's been coughing every bit of the night enough to tear him in two."

"I'm so sorry. I say, Cardella, old chap," going within the room and to the side of the couch, "I forgot all about you. You see, it's so jolly to find one's self out of that beastly Afghanistan, one can't help feeling rather cheerful; and, you know, you never take any notice in a general way."

"No; I know. I'm not homesick in a general way; but oh, Lord, I'd give all I'm worth to find myself at the Castle this minute!" Then he added in a lower tone: "I begin to feel, though, as if I never shall find myself there again."

"Oh, come, come, Eliot, old man, this won't do!" Dickson put in, with rough kindness. "You've had a bad go of that beastly Peshawur fever, and you're seedy and down in the mouth yet; but you must not give in in this way. If you would only do as you are told, if you would only obey the orders Haines gives you, we should have you off the sick-list and up in the hills in a fortnight. But you know you won't, Cardella. You seem to think an empty sack will stand upright; but it won't, and it's no use trying to make it."

"Oh yes; I know—Haines comes in with his great roaring, healthy voice that goes through my head like a knife, and he says nothing but eat, eat, eat, till I'd like to choke him with his own prescription," Cardella answered irritably, and moving his aching head restlessly from side to side. "Nothing but eat, eat, eat! The ass might as well tell me not to cough!"

"Well now, look here, Eliot," Dickson said persuasively. "Here's a note and some jelly from Mrs. Hey. She's made



it herself, because she knows you don't fancy the native cooking. 'Pon my soul, I didn't think there was so much goodness in the woman! If she hadn't had a downright good heart of her own, she'd have pretended she hadn't the least idea how jelly was made. Just look at it! I did not disturb you before, because I thought you were asleep."

As he spoke he brought for Cardella's inspection a deep dish, wherein lay, reposing amongst lumps of ice, a heap of golden jelly, tempting enough to entice the poorest and most capricious appetite.

"Eat it yourself," said Cardella wretchedly.

"Stuff and nonsense! you have to do that," Dickson answered. "I know you don't want it, but you've got to eat it. Remember, a lady made it for you, even if she is only a Quartermaster's wife, and may have been a cook to start with. All the luckier for you if she was, you ungrateful beggar!"

"I am not ungrateful, Dickson," returned Cardella, with dignified fretfulness. "It's devilish good of the little woman. Go this evening and tell her so; but eat the stuff I can't, and that's the long and the short of it."

However, by dint of much persuasion, coaxing, bullying and arguing, Dickson and Laurie between them did manage to induce their patient to swallow a few bits of Mrs. Hey's jelly; and presently, when the heat of the day had gone off and Dickson had taken him for a drive, Laurie got on his pony and went round to the Quartermaster's bungalow to thank Mrs. Hey for her kindness and the trouble she had taken.

"Yes, he has eaten some twice," he told her. "But he seems to have an utter distaste for food of any kind—can't swallow anything solid, and Haines won't let him have as many iced pegs as he would like. And then, poor chap, he not only coughs all night, but he's in miserable spirits and wretchedly homesick."

"Poor fellow," murmured the Quartermaster's little wife pityingly, "I don't wonder at it. For my part, you may

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take the delights of living in India. Mrs. Newcombe used to rave about it as if it was a kind of paradise. She may think it very fine to have a dozen partners for every dance—men that wouldn't look at you at home—when you haven't energy to take two turns. I can't abide the nasty hole—nasty black servants sneaking about with their nasty bare feet. I'm sure I can't fancy eating anything they've touched with their nasty black fingers. In fact, I daren't go into the hole the cook calls his kitchen, or I should never eat aught he cooked again. In this country it's best to live on the principle of what the eye never sees the heart never grieves for. And she used to prate about the fruits—well, I know I'd rather have a pennyworth of the commonest pears out of Blankhampton market than all the fruits I've seen in India yet."

"Yes, you're right, Mrs. Hey," Laurie answered, laughing. "It's a beastly hole, no mistake about it; all the same, it's a perfect paradise compared with Afghanistan."

"So Joe says—he calls that a place where there's more reason to cry or swear than anything else. Must you go?" as Laurie rose. "Your ride! Well, we were going for a drive ourselves, so I'll not press you to stay. Good-night, and tell Mr. Cardella I hope he'll soon pull round."

"Yes, I'll tell him," Laurie called out, as he rode off. "Good-night."

Meantime Dickson and Cardella were returning from their drive, and Dickson was saying, "You're better, Eliot, ever so much; we've driven twice as fast as we did last week."

"Yes, I shall pull through, I dare say," he answered indifferently.

"I can't tell what's come to you lately," his friend went on. "Independently of this fever, you're very much altered."

"Men do alter," said Cardella briefly.

"You're not hankering after that girl at Blankhampton?" looking down at him searchingly.

Cardella burst into a laugh—a laugh that was very

scornful, though it was so weak and ended in a paroxysm of coughing. He made no other reply, and Dickson asked no further questions ; yet he knew, as well as if Eliot Cardella had told him so, that he had left his heart behind him in England, and had not brought one away with him in exchange for it.

Later in the evening, he sat alone in the veranda, puffing at a gigantic meerschaum, and wondering—wondering chiefly why women-folks should be so utterly inexplicable. There was Cardella, as handsome and as winning a fellow as might be found in a day's march—the son of an earl, with plenty of money, and not yet thirty years old. It seemed beyond all reason that any woman should have refused him, or, supposing matters not to have gone so far as that, have passed him by for another. He did not wonder that Polly Antrobus—"that girl at Blankhampton"—had loosened her hold of him to fly at higher game which *seemed* to be within her grasp ; she had been influenced by vanity, ambition, and the counsels of her grasping worldly minded parents ; Eliot had been regularly let in in the first place, and in their turn the biters had been bitten. All that was simple enough ; but this—this entire change of the man's whole nature—this terrible home-sickness, coupled with a refusal to accept home-leave, did puzzle Dickson tremendously.

"Always a woman at the bottom of it all," he muttered to the meerschaum.

And then his thoughts flew back to that dead and gone romance of his own, when he had hoped to cut the army altogether, and retire into private life in a country-house, the mistress of which should be tall and fair and stately—the mistress of which should be Nell Vansittart, who had refused him for the sake of a man who had jilted her.

How wretched he had been ! He stretched his long legs out, with a feeling of comfortable triumph that he could never be so entirely wretched again—no, not even if fifty Nell Vansittarts should say him nay. The old love was quite dead and gone—it could never rise up to trouble him

any more, yet how utterly wretched he had been; he remembered, with microscopic distinctness, the exact state of his feelings during the first weeks of his disappointment—how Gore had very nearly driven him mad by what he called his “song.”

“Oh, my Jem—Jemima,  
She’s left her loving Sa—am,  
And gone to be a Mormonite  
In New Jer—u—sa—lam!”

Gore was at it yet. After five years the fellows had not grown weary of hearing, nor he of singing it. He just mounted a chair now, as he had done any time the last ten years, and see-sawed his arms up and down in the “fearless old fashion,” like a windmill suddenly gone crazy or drunk. He had heard him sing it on board the *Jumna*; he had heard him sing it in the railway carriage on the road to Unapore; he had heard it at Simla—in the classic precincts of the Khyber Pass—among the roses and jasmine blooms of the Ahmeer’s garden at Jellalabad—in the Bala Hissar itself.

“I shouldn’t wonder if he isn’t singing it down at the mess at this moment,” Dickson said to himself, with a contemptuous laugh.

Then his thoughts went back to Eliot Cardella. He couldn’t help wondering what it was that had changed him so awfully. The regiment had been out three years. Long and Laurie had been left with the depôt; then Martin and Cardella had taken it. After rather more than a year’s absence, he had returned to his regiment as a captain, and they had been ordered to Afghanistan almost immediately, where they remained nearly a year; he had noticed the change in Cardella at once.

“Whatever it was, it took place whilst he was with the depôt. Poor chap, he’s had it bad; I got over it entirely in less than three months.”

Then his attention was diverted, for Laurie came out into the veranda and settled himself in a big chair near Dickson.

"Cardella's off to sleep at last," he announced; "his bearer has just told me."

"That's good, if the cough don't awake him, poor chap. I say, Laurie."

"Ye—es," said Laurie, holding his pipe between his teeth, and striking a fusee.

"What sort of people are there at Canterbury?"

"What sort of people?" Laurie repeated, turning his head to peer at his friend through the darkness. "What sort of people? Oh, the usual ruck—Church dignitaries and army-fellows, and—and—a few women, of course."

"What sort of women?"

"Hey?" peering through the darkness again, and speaking in a sharp but puzzled tone.

"Any women a man would be likely to fall in love with?" Dickson continued, by way of explanation,

"Why, are you thinking of asking for the depôt?"

"Not I. You forget I shall most likely get the majority of the White Dragoons."

"Oh yes; so they say. Well, what do you want to know about the Canterbury women? I tell you there was the usual ruck—the De Courcy-Joneses, the Kensington-Smiths, the Parkinson-Browns, and—and—there was Miss Ross."

"And what was Miss Ross like?" Dickson asked.

"Miss Ross! Oh, she was a brunette."

"Good style?"

"Oh, devilish!"

"Any money? Was she a lady?"

"Not a penny. I believe her father had been in the army—in fact, I'm sure of it. By Jove, but she was a beauty!" sending a great sigh of regret out into the night air along with the tobacco smoke. "In fact, Dickson, if I hadn't been such a miserably poor devil as I am, I believe I should have asked Miss Ross to marry me."

"Ah, I see," said Dickson comprehensively; while to himself he said, "That's the woman;" and then he asked, "Why on earth did she refuse Eliot?"

## CHAPTER II.

IT was winter—an Indian one, of course; yet nearly as pleasant to the burnt-up Cuirassiers as the same season in England—weather so deliciously cool that they could wear their ordinary English clothes, needed fires at morn and even-time, and used fur-rugs on their beds just as they had been accustomed to do in their mother-country.

Laurie and Cardella were by themselves at their bungalow, Dickson and Gore being both on leave: Dickson on short leave, owing to a sprained foot; Gore indefinitely, with an affection of the liver, brought on, Dickson declared, by persistent see-sawing up and down of his arms, which, as I have said, was his idea of accompaniment to his solitary song.

Cardella had had a long leave, spent among the gaities of Simla, where he had given up sighing and had taken to *safe* flirtation, and very sincerely repented himself of his foolishness in refusing the home-leave which had been offered to him at the close of his service in Afghanistan. In health he was much improved, having almost got rid of the Peshawur fever, which only returned now and again in mild attacks when he happened to get in the way of a chill.

The European mails were just in, so Laurie and Cardella had been occupied all day, each having had a goodly budget of letters and newspapers, which had kept them amused from noon till dinner-time. Then they had gone to mess, and now were lounging in front of an immense fire of sweet-smelling wood, smoking, while they discussed the home news.

"Fancy, Snipes married!" said Laurie, with a laugh, naming the officer then in command of the dépôt. "Just fancy old Snipes getting married!"

"No, I cannot fancy Snipes married," returned Cardella solemnly. "I'll be hanged if I can. Poor old chap! I wonder if he's converted her to spiritualism yet?"

"Not he; he's married her under the impression she's a



medium of the first water. Take my word for it, Jakey Smith didn't need any conversion; she'd go in for the whole spiritualistic humbug hot and strong, as soon as ever she heard Snipes was touched in that quarter. She tried excessive horsiness on me. Did you ever see Jakey on horseback?"

"No," laughing at Laurie's manner. "What was the effect?"

"The effect?—well, it was odd—very odd. You see, Jakey had rather a pretty sort of face, but no shape to speak of—had a kind of idea, I fancy, from the way she showed it, that her tailor could make her one. Now, between you and me, a powder-box and a dash of paint will go a long way towards making a pretty face, particularly when there's a veil over it; but as for a made-up shape—O Lord! it's very seldom a tailor manages to make it look 'natteral;' and when he does, it's just an achievement he ought to be horsewhipped for accomplishing."

"And Jakey Smith—oh! I beg her pardon, *Ken-sing-ton-Smith*, with three hyphens to make sure of it, eh?" Cardella laughed.

"Yes. Well, you see Jakey had one of that sort of shapes that stick out on the wrong side of her, as if her head wanted turning round and putting on the other way. Well, her tailor, not being used to such a delicate operation, tried to remedy it by putting plenty of cotton-wool on the flat side, and Jakey supplemented his efforts by stuffing in plenty of pocket-handkerchiefs. Naturally the effect was a curve on both sides, and the *tout ensemble* certainly was funny—seen on horseback."

"I should think so," with a great laugh at the description.

"What dodge did she try on with you?" Laurie continued.

"With me?—nothing."

"Nothing—by George! but you don't mean to say the celebrated Jakey didn't have so much as a shot at you?"

"Why, she did rather hint at being so awfully fond of horses," Cardella answered; "but I didn't think she meant riding mine. You see I'd never seen her on horseback, so it didn't occur to me."

"It wouldn't, naturally," Laurie replied. "Did you ever see Miss Ross on horseback? Did you know her?"

"Yes, I knew her."

"Pretty girl," Laurie went on. "Very pretty girl, wasn't she?"

"Awfully handsome," with a sigh.

"Different to all the Browns and Smiths and Joneses, eh?"

Cardella laughed, and Laurie continued:

"Ah, if I'd been a rich fellow—which I'm not—I rather think I should have gone in for Miss Ross. I don't suppose she'd have had me, though."

"I am sure she would," said Cardella steadily.

"The devil you are—what makes you think so?"

"She as good as told me so."

"Th—e devil she did!" He was so thoroughly surprised that his vocabulary all at once grew limited. "Are you sure, Cardella?"

"Quite sure," Cardella answered quietly.

"Well, upon my word, you never know what women will or won't be up to next. One thing's very certain, they're the queerest beggars out," Laurie remarked, his astonishment in nowise lessened.

A pang of pain shot through Cardella's heart. It did seem hard that the girl he loved should have preferred before him such a man as Laurie, who, right good fellow that he was, had neither reverence nor chivalry in his composition—it made him positively sick to hear her classed with all her sex in a lump, as "the queerest beggars out."

"I should have thought you were much more likely to take her fancy than an ordinary-looking chap like me," Laurie went on, in very heart-whole tones. "I should think if you had put the question to her plump, she'd have given my memory the go-by quickly enough."

"So I did."

"You did? Lord bless me! I wouldn't have believed it from anyone but yourself. Cardella, are you quite sure?"

"I'm quite sure, Laurie."

"But what the devil did she see in me? I never made love to her in my life. I might have been engaged to a dozen women for anything she knew to the contrary. As a matter of fact, I kept out of it, for I knew I should probably never be able to marry a wife who couldn't bring some money with her; and as Miss Ross was as poor as myself, I thought it best and safest in the long-run to keep on the right side of the hedge. But, I say, Cardella, how do you know she was thinking of me?"

"I tell you she as good as told me so."

"It's most extraordinary—'pon my soul, it is," Laurie went on, in greater astonishment than ever. "What could she have been thinking of, a poor devil like me, without a sixpence to bless himself with! Well, *if* ever I come in for a fortune, I must go and ask Miss Ross to share it, but I'm afraid the contingency is a very remote one."

"More unlikely things have come about," said Cardella absently.

"Oh yes, quite so. I have a fabulously rich godfather knocking about somewhere or other. He never did anything for me yet, not so much as a mug; but Heaven only knows what freaks he may not take into his head. I dare say, though, by the time he has left me a fortune, Miss Ross will be transformed into Mrs. Somebody or other, and will have forgotten I ever existed. I wish she had taken you, though perhaps your people mightn't have liked it. Did your brother see her?"

"Yes, he did."

"Did he admire her?"

"Oh, immensely," laughing at the remembrance of it. "In fact, I thought it was all right till he turned up; and then, just as I thought he was going to cut me out, as he did with Polly Antrobus, all this about you came to light."

"And how did it come to light?"

"Well, the fact was, I began to think Cardella was getting serious, so I asked her flat out if she'd have me. And she told me honestly she'd given her heart away. I asked if she was engaged, and she said 'No.' And then I asked her if it was anyone I knew, and she said 'Yes.' And I guessed you directly, because I knew there was no one else likely. She blushed awfully, and didn't say anything; but the last time I saw her, before we left Canterbury, she said, 'Take care of Mr. Laurie;' and I told her I would if I could."

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Laurie, who didn't believe a word of it, and imagined his friend was solemnly taking a rise out of him, or that Miss Ross was doing the same to Eliot Cardella.

Believe it—not he. "Depend upon it," he said to himself, after he had turned into bed that night, "the little devil's up to worse mischief—got a bigger fish to land. Lost her heart to me—a very likely story! Got a bigger fish to land, so put Cardella off with that humbugging tale; unless, indeed, Cardella made it up as he went on. And yet it told like truth, and I shouldn't wonder if she did tell him so. All the same, I don't believe a word of her losing her heart in my direction; I'd not believe it if she swore it. And I doubt very much if Cardella really proposed, and I have no doubt whatever about her refusing him. 'Tisn't in reason; why, she'd simply have jumped at him."

### CHAPTER III.

A FEW days later, Dickson came back from his short leave, to Eliot Cardella's great delight.

The two were close friends, though there was five years' difference in their ages. They suited each other, and though Cardella was very good friends with both Laurie and Gore, he was never quite so well satisfied with the companionship of either of them, as he was with Dickson's.

"It's so jolly to have you back," he told him, over their first smoke. "What have you been doing? Tell me all about everything."

"And what have you been doing?" asked Dickson in reply.

"I—oh, the usual thing—work—lunch—bye-bye—dinner—drive—smoke to wind up with," Cardella answered.

"Oh, I didn't mean here. You can't get into much mischief in Khotah; that's quite out of the question; unless, indeed, you went in for Mrs. Long or one of the staff ladies, which you're not likely to do. No, I meant up at Simla there," jerking his thumb towards the hills. "I've about fifty messages for you (all from married ladies, too), but unfortunately they've all got jumbled up together. I wish I'd written them all down. And oh! by-the-bye, I met a fellow called Forde, a splendid fellow, just out to join the Queen's Dragoons from the Red Lancers at Blankhampton; and what do you think the fair Polly has been and gone and done?"

"How should I know?" said Cardella, opening his eyes very widely.

"Been and gone and got married," Dickson announced.

"Nothing more likely; if my brother hadn't cut me out, I dare say I should have married her myself. Well, and who has she married?"

"She's married a German Jew chap," Dickson returned. "And Forde says he is without any exception the ugliest little devil he ever saw in the whole course of his life, black and sallow and bald, with yellow teeth like a horse, very shaky about his pins, and old enough to be Polly's papa."

Cardella closed his eyes, and kept them shut.

"It's enough to make one sick," he murmured.

"Yes; rather a descent," Dickson laughed. "Eliot Cardella to start with; then a viscount, with an earldom in prospective. And to come down, after all, to a German Jew!"

"Enough to make one sick," repeated Eliot Cardella scornfully; "after—*me*."

Dickson laughed again, and just then Laurie came quietly in and settled himself in a big chair, without speaking.

"What's the matter, Laurie?" Dickson asked, looking at him keenly.

"Oh, nothing! I've got a devil of a headache, that's all," Laurie answered. "Don't mind me—go on jawing. I like to hear it."

"I wonder what ever Laurie would do without his Satanic Majesty as a universal adjective," cried Cardella, with a laugh.

"It's a bad habit I've got into," said Laurie, clasping his hands at the back of his head and staring up at the ceiling; "I must try and get off it, for it don't always fit."

"No, by Jove, that's true!" cried Cardella, laughing again. "We'd such a joke the other night, Dickson. There's been a bishop and his wife staying at the chaplain's, and the other night there was a big dinner to meet them; everybody there, pretty nearly. Of course it was precious slow, and conversation was tolerably bald; so imagine the position when, in the middle of a dead silence, Mrs. Bishop suddenly tackled Laurie and informed him she was his god-mother—said it, too, as if it was a fact he ought to be inordinately proud of. Laurie was so astonished he blurted out, 'The devil you are!' Gad, that woman's face was a study! I say, Laurie, is your head very bad?"

"Awfully bad!" he answered. "I'll be off to roost and leave you two—you can tell me any extra good jokes in the morning."

"I believe he's going to be ill," said Dickson, as Laurie stumbled away.

"Oh, it's this beastly climate!" rejoined Cardella promptly. "Of course you know Hey is down with typhoid?"

"No; really?"

"Really. Has it been bad, and it's doubtful if he'll pull

through, after drinking like a fish for ten years or more. I should say it will go hard with him. I wonder if Laurie's been fooling round about their place? I send morning and evening to ask after him, for the little woman was awfully good when I was ill, but I don't see the good of going myself. I can't be of any use to either of them; and besides, I've never quite shaken off that Peshawur souvenir, and I don't suppose I ever shall."

"You ought to have gone home."

"Yes, I know. I wish I had; but I was miserable and down on my luck then, and I simply hadn't the heart to, and that's the truth. I'd go now, if I had the chance, sharp enough."

" 'He that will not, when he may,  
When he will, he shall have nay,' "

quoted Dickson, with a laugh.

"That is so. Well, have you no other news—nothing else to tell about the people up at Simla?"

"Well, I made the acquaintance of a lady called Vasher—Mrs. Anthony Vasher," said Dickson deliberately.

"Oh, did you, though? Well?"

"Well?" copying Cardella's tone. "And Mrs. Anthony Vasher was a very pretty woman—that is, if you admire that type—red and brown."

"I do. I admired her immensely; and besides, she was very like a lady I knew at home."

"Miss Ross, of Canterbury, I suppose," said Dickson carelessly.

Cardella looked startled.

"What do you know about Miss Ross, Dickson?" he asked. "Who told you anything about her?"

"Well, it was a fellow called Smith, of the Horse Artillery. He told me Mrs. Anthony Vasher was remarkably like a Miss Ross, of Canterbury."

"Did he know her? Miss Ross, I mean."

"Yes; I fancy rather well," Dickson replied.

He did not think it necessary to say that, suspecting

Miss Ross to be the lady who had made such a change in Cardella, he had quietly pumped the man called Smith of all he knew concerning her.

"What did he say about her? Tell me."

Dickson looked up coolly.

"Do you know her very well, Cardella?"

"Yes; what did he say?"

"Oh, I'd rather not tell you, since she's a friend of yours. I wish I hadn't mentioned it."

"Dickson, do tell me. Miss Ross is nothing, and never will be anything, to me. She never cared a button for me; but I want to know."

"Well, if you will, I suppose you will," Dickson answered slowly. "He said she was the d——dest little jilt he'd ever come across in the whole course of his life."

"Pooh!" Cardella exclaimed scornfully; "I suppose that means she refused him. I don't wonder—a man called Smith."

"Oh, very likely—I thought so myself at the time. He was a very decent-looking chap, though—but badly off."

"Did he tell you anything else?" Cardella demanded.

"Oh, I forget—I altogether forget," Dickson replied, wishing devoutly he had held his tongue from the beginning. "How can I pretend to remember a lot of idle talk about a woman I never saw, and don't ever want to see? Why, he used to send me off to sleep very nearly every night with his everlasting talkee-talkee."

"But what else did he say?" Cardella persisted, seeing from Dickson's manner that he did not choose to remember or at least repeat it.

"Oh, I forget. Talk about something else."

"But I want to know——"

"I tell you I forget. If I could remember and repeat all Smith's drivelling rot, I should be more fit to go into a lunatic asylum, and stop there, than to remain in the Cuirassiers. Heaven knows, it was bad enough to hear it at first-hand without having it all over again at second."



But Cardella was not to be put off in that way ; he knew Dickson as well as he knew himself, and in spite of the vociferous protestations to the contrary, he perceived very clearly that whatever "drivelling rot" the man called Smith might or might not have talked, Dickson had *not* forgotten it, and it was something which pretty closely concerned Cardella himself.

"When did he come out?" he asked abruptly.

"Oh, the beginning of the year," Dickson answered.

Cardella was more determined to get at the truth than ever, and Dickson was equally determined not to tell it. But Cardella had been a spoilt child always, accustomed to have his own way all his life ; so, though he held his peace for the moment, he by no means abandoned his determination to hear what the man called Smith had said. In fact, that night, when Dickson had been in bed half an hour, and was already asleep, Cardella went unceremoniously into his room, and said :

"Dickson !"

"Hey ! What's up ?" asked Dickson, starting up from his pillows.

"What was it that Smith chap said ?"

"Now look here, Cardella, this won't do. Just go out of my bedroom, will you ?"

"Dickson——" Cardella began persuasively.

"Do you want a boot tossing at your head, or do you not ?" Dickson asked, feeling over the side of the low bed for something to shy at the intruder.

"Dickson, will you tell me ?"

"No, I won't !" Dickson returned promptly. "Get out of this."

"But, Dickson——" he began ; then he had to dodge one boot, and then another. Then Dickson asked satirically, was he going to stop there all night ?

"Only until you tell me," Cardella replied, doggedly.

Dickson groaned.

"O Lord, these women ! what a curse they are ! What's the good of stirring up muddy water ?" he asked.

"Will you tell me, Dickson?"

"Won't you go away without?" Dickson was desperately sleepy, and hated having his rest broken.

"No, I won't," said Cardella flatly.

"Then I'll tell you, and if you don't like it, you needn't break my head over it. He said your brother Cardella was coming and going pretty often; and if Miss Ross didn't catch him, it wouldn't be for want of trying. There, are you satisfied now?"

Cardella turned and walked out of the room without saying a word.

"I expect that was a faecer for him, poor ehap!" said Dickson to himself, as he laid his head on his pillow again.

But just as he was dropping off to sleep for the second time, Cardella came in again.

"I say, Dickson."

Dickson began to lose his temper.

"What the devil is it now?" he asked, irritably.

"I don't believe a word of it—it's a damned lie!" Cardella announced, in a tone of dogged triumph.

"Go to Jerieho!" returned Dickson politely; "and look here, my friend, if you come into my room again, with your tomfoolery, I'll just get up and kiek you out of it;" but Cardella was gone, and Dickson settled himself among his pillows with an angry shake and a still more angry "O Lord, these women! what an everlasting curse they are!"

However, settle himself as he would, Dickson found he couldn't go to sleep; he tossed restlessly to and fro during the whole night, desperately sleepy, yet unable to sleep for the jumble of Mrs. Anthony Vasher, Miss Ross, Cardella and the man called Smith, which filled his head, the result of which was, that he rose in about as bad a temper as Cardella or anyone else had ever seen him in. And the worst of it all was, that Cardella had the cheek to laugh at him.

"Oh, you may laugh," Dickson told him in warning accents; "but don't try it on again, my friend, that's all."

"I say, Dickson."

"Well, what is it now?" crossly.

"Well, it's just this. Scott Laurie is very ill this morning—no mistake about it—and I've sent for Haines to come at once."

"You don't say so?" the vexation fading out of his face. "Then you'd better clear out of this at once; if it's typhoid and you take it, you won't have a chance."

"We don't know that it is typhoid, but I shall stay here in any case."

"You'll do nothing of the kind. I shall tell Haines to send you away."

"I shouldn't go for fifty Haineses," Cardella answered. "And besides, it mayn't be typhoid at all; and if it were, do you suppose, Dickson, that I'm such a coward that I should run away from it, after he stayed by me as he did? Besides, there are other reasons why, if he is going to be really ill, I should stay and do the best I could for him."

"I'll tell you what it is, Cardella, my friend," said Dickson vexedly: "you're very fond of asking my advice, but I never knew you take it yet."

"Dickson, if I were sickening for typhoid, would you immediately run away from me?"

"No, of course I should not; but then I have not had a serious go of Peshawur fever."

"And if you had had?"

"I shouldn't dream of running the risk you propose," said Dickson decidedly.

"Oh yes, you would, even if it killed you; and so shall I. All the same, Laurie may merely have one of his sick headaches. Anyway, it's no use worrying about it before Haines has seen him."

However, when Dr. Haines had seen Laurie, he ordered Cardella to look for fresh quarters forthwith.

"It mayn't be, but I think it is," he said; "and you, Cardella, are in no state to risk anything;" at which Cardella laughed, and stayed where he was.

In vain did Dickson and the doctor remonstrate with him—by Scott Laurie's bedside he remained, with a resolution which after a few days Dickson, knowing him well, gave up combating; and between them they brought their comrade back from the very gates of death—nearer to death itself than most men can go and live. But it was only after a month of incessant care and anxiety that Dr. Haines pronounced the patient out of danger, and told Cardella seriously that he might relax his efforts and take care of himself, that he had been the means of saving his friend's life, and that, if no unlooked-for relapse took place, he would live. It was too late to bid Cardella take precaution for himself; as Laurie, after three weeks of almost incessant delirium, came slowly back to a consciousness of who and where he was, Cardella sickened, and sank rapidly into the depths of extreme illness.

Dickson was almost beside himself, and poor Laurie, when the news was blurted out to him by an indiscreet Hindoo, lay in his bed, a gaunt white-faced skeleton, and cried weakly, until a relapse came on which very nearly brought his weakness and his suffering to a close; and by the time he had struggled back to life again, with a very indistinct idea that something had happened to somebody—he was not very sure who, or when or where, but half-remembering that it was Cardella, asked if Cardella was all right, he thought, from Dickson's grave face, that Cardella was not only ill, but in the very greatest danger.

"Wasn't he taken ill? Didn't Satan" (he had named his bearer Satan from the day he entered his service)—"didn't Satan tell me he'd taken the fever from me?" he asked in his pitiably weak, childish voice.

Dickson's words reassured him. "Cardella's all right now. Don't worry yourself about anything; what you have to do is to obey orders and get well, and then we'll send you off to the hills."

"Did Hey pull through? Hey was ill too, wasn't he?"

"Oh yes; he's been at Simla a fortnight!" Dickson answered, with a great assumption of cheerfulness. "And the little woman has written ever so many times to know how you are."

"Very kind of her," closing his eyes and uttering a great sigh of satisfaction. "And I'm awfully glad Cardella pulled through; I was afraid."

If he had been looking at him, he could not but have seen the spasm of pain which passed over Dickson's face; but then, as I said, his eyes were closed.

"You two saved my life," putting out a wasted, trembling hand to touch Dickson's strong one.

"Cardella did that," said Dickson.

"Yes; I believe I pretty nearly lived leaning on his broad shoulder. But you were there too. Dickson, it was awfully good of you both."

"Nonsense—nonsense! Go to sleep now, and don't worry!" returned Dickson hastily. Then he went away and left him alone.

Laurie was soon enough asleep, and slept a peaceful, refreshing slumber for a couple of hours; then, just at sunset, he awoke with a start.

*What was that?*

He tried to lift himself upon his elbow, but he could not; he tried to call out, but the words died in his throat. So he lay unable to move, trembling violently in every limb, listening. Listening to what? To something that was taking place in the next room—Cardella's room—*what?* He could hear a hushed scuffling, an unusual treading of feet—spurred heels, he would swear; then a scuffling again, and the sound of a voice that said, "*Hush!*" What did it mean?

"Dickson," he called at last—"Dickson!"

His bearer (Satan) ran hastily in, and, seeing that he was horribly excited, fetched Dickson, who came to him treading softly, holding sword and sabretasche away from floor and leg, and trying to lessen the jingle of his spurred heels upon the floor.

"What is it, old man?"

"What are they doing in Cardella's room?" Laurie gasped.

Dickson set his face like stone, but after an instant's hesitation he spoke in his usual cheery tones.

"My dear chap, we hoped to have managed it without waking you—we thought we shouldn't disturb you at all. They are taking Cardella away—to—a—better—climate—as we shall take you if you behave yourself."

"Oh! my God, what a fright!" Laurie groaned, passing his shaking hand across his eyes. "I—I—thought he was dead, Dickson—I did indeed."

"Your nerves are all to smash, old man—that's about it," Dickson answered soothingly.

Then Laurie opened his eyes again.

"Why are you in full-dress, Dickson? and you have a crape on your arm! You're not deceiving me?" looking at him with anxious eyes, that seemed twice too big for his wasted face.

"Did I ever deceive you?" Dickson asked. "Poor young Cartwright, of the 70th, died last night of heart disease, and I'm going to the funeral. Poor lad, he just closed his eyes in the middle of dinner, and was gone in a minute."

"Poor lad—poor lad!" murmured Laurie. He forgot Cardella then, and thought only about the dead lad, who had gone in a minute. He lay listening to the solemn strains of the "Dead March," half-vacantly, half-realizing the narrow escape he had had of its being played for him. Then the muffled boom of the drum brought Cardella into his mind again.

"If I hadn't called out to Dickson, this would have killed me," he said to himself. "I should have been certain it was Cardella."

At that very moment Dickson was standing beside two open graves—Cardella's and that of the lad called Cartwright, who had gone in a moment—wondering if God would forgive him for the lies his lips had just uttered.

And as he stared, with dry, miserable eyes, into the depths wherein he had laid his best friend, the men gathered round about whispered to one another that they wouldn't have believed poor old Dickson could be so cut up—though, of course, Cardella and he had been inseparable friends ever since the day the latter had joined the regiment.

Then they all trooped off, and Dickson had to go back to his bungalow to face a dreadful blank, to gather Cardella's belongings together, to write the last dreadful details to Lady Mallinbro'; worst of all, to sit hour after hour with Laurie, to hear Cardella's name upon his lips fifty times in the course of a day, to answer his questions day after day as best he could, and wonder how systematic liars contrive to get through the world at all.

And then there came a day when he was obliged to tell Laurie the truth—to tell him that Cardella had sacrificed his life for him—the day when Laurie was carried into the adjoining room, and wondered cheerfully if, when he was able to move, he hadn't better go straight to join Cardella?

"And by-the-bye, Dickson," he ended, "you never told me whether he went to Murree or Simla."

Dickson pushed his chair back into the shadow.

"To neither," he said, in a very low voice.

"No! where, then?"

"Where he will never have fever of any kind any more," Dickson answered.

"Dead!" incredulously—"not dead?"

Dickson bent his head in silence.

"Oh! God in heaven!" groaned the other, then burst out sobbing like a child.

As for Dickson, he rose from his chair and wandered up and down the big room restlessly, trying hard to keep himself from breaking down, as his comrade, reduced in strength to the level of a child, had done.

"He gave me my life at the cost of his own. What had I ever done that he should have sacrificed himself like this? What value was my poor life, that his should be given for

it? Why didn't you send him away? I hadn't my senses to tell him to keep away from me. What could I do, a poor devil off his head for weeks together? You know how he had been weakened by that beastly Peshawur fever, and that there wasn't a chance for him."

"I did my best," Dickson answered; "but you know, Laurie, as well as I do, what an unbending nature Cardella's was. I argued and stormed and entreated. I might as well have tried to move a mountain. You had done your best for him, he said; he would do the same by you—it was his duty. I could more easily have pulled this bungalow down with my own hands, than have moved Eliot from what he believed to be his duty. And besides, he was not only thinking of your life, but of her happiness."

"Her happiness—whose?"

"This Miss Ross you were both in love with."

"Miss Ross—in love—I!" Laurie cried incredulously. "In love—I! I tell you, Dickson, I would have let fifty Miss Rosses die rather than one Eliot Cardella."

"Then you're not really in love with her?"

"In love!" scornfully—"I!"

"But she cares for you, so Cardella saved your life for her happiness; she told him to take care of you, and so he did to the end."

"I tell you the girl cared no more for *me*——" Laurie began.

"Well, she told him she did, and he believed her," Dickson interrupted. "He has left you what property he had of his own, some five or six hundred a year, that you may go home and marry her at once."

"It is too horrible!" Laurie broke out. "Dickson, did he tell you all this?"

"Yes."

"And when? Was it when he was ill?"

"He made his will before he left England, as soon as he knew she liked you—or *said* she did," correcting himself bitterly. "As for the rest, he told me the last time he



recognised me, I was to tell you to give her his love and his blessing."

"It is too horrible!" Laurie cried again, in a voice of anguish. "I tell you neither I nor the girl are worth it, and she cared no more for me than she did for Long himself. I suppose I shall have to go home and ask her to marry me. Heaven knows, I would rather go and hang myself!"

"But, Laurie, you told me yourself you would have asked her if——"

"Oh yes! because I knew I couldn't. If I had been a rich man, I should never have looked at her. Dickson, did he suffer very much?"

"Not much. He died of sheer exhaustion—as Haines predicted he would; it was not typhoid, but a return of the Peshawur fever brought on by a chill."

"And how did he get a chill?"

"Well, he had been up several nights; and on the night that you got a turn he gave in, and instead of going to bed he sat down in the veranda to smoke a pipe, and he went off to sleep—where I found him."

"Then that day I heard them in his room was the funeral?"

"Yes. I couldn't tell you, Laurie; it was a matter of life and death with you, and I was obliged to put you off. God forgive me for the awful lies I told you."

"I think He will," said Laurie very quietly; "but I shall never forgive myself for having murdered him."

"Laurie!"

"He told me not to go near Hey's, and I went in spite of him, like the wooden-headed fool I am," Laurie persisted wretchedly. "And in return for my idiocy he simply fagged himself to death. As for that woman, she cared as much for me as—as—for the man in the moon. I ask you, Dickson, is it likely any woman would refuse Cardella for *my* sake? Is it in reason? No—a thousand times no. I shall have to ask her to marry me; but I am convinced that

in putting Cardella off, she was merely trying to drag somebody with more money on."

It was just a week after this that Dickson went into Laurie's room with a packet of letters and papers in his hand—the English mail was in.

"Two for you," tossing them over to his comrade, and laying aside, with a sigh, two thick packages addressed

*"The Hon. Eliot Cardella."*

"Bills!" said Laurie, throwing them down; "give me a paper whilst you read your letters."

Dickson handed the *Times* across the table, and Laurie opened it at the first column. The paper was, of course, more than three weeks old, being dated three days before that of Eliot Cardella's death. Laurie read through the list of births as carefully as only a man in India can read, telling Dickson twice when a youngster had come for some one they knew. Then an exclamation broke from him, which caused Dickson to look up.

"What is it?" he asked.

"It is too utterly horrible!" Laurie cried, trembling violently from head to foot. "He has given his life for the sake of the falsest Jezebel that ever lived. I knew it was all a lie—I knew she was up to some deep crafty game when she lied to him about me. It is no odds to me whom she chose to marry. Heaven knows, I am thankful to get off it; but it has cost him his life. Oh, it is too horrible—too utterly horrible that Cardella has married his brother's murderess!"

"What!" cried Dickson, snatching at the paper.

For a moment he could not see the lines; then the mist cleared away from before his eyes, and he was able to read the announcement.

"On the 15th, at St. Peter's, Eaton Square, Cecil, Viscount Cardella, to Lillias, only child of the late Major Ross, R.H.A."

“Lilias—yes, they used to call her Lily—a nice kind of ‘Lily’!” put in Laurie scornfully; “and Eliot has given his life for the sake of the most worthless little jilt that ever lived.” And Dickson, remembering the gossip of the man called Smith, was silent.

So Eliot Cardella passed away into the things that are no more—a martyr to a heartless lia.

## *THE HAND OF THE DEAD.*

ELIOT CARDELLA had been dead three months, when a draft in charge of two officers arrived to join the regiment at Khotah, the two officers being Captain Page, more commonly spoken of by his brother-officers as "Snipes," and a lieutenant, by name William Havers.

The Pages had taken off their hands, as it stood, the bungalow which had been occupied by the Russells, who had gone home to take their turn with the dépôt; so, when they arrived at Khotah, they found themselves comfortably housed without any trouble or inconvenience. For Havers, however, there were absolutely no quarters; house accommodation in Khotah was limited, and as the Cuirassiers had a large number of married officers, he arrived at his destination not knowing where he would have to lay his head.

"I wonder if Dickson would let him have poor Cardella's rooms?" said Gore to Laurie, when Havers was shaking hands all round the mess, and wondering who would take him in. "He says Snipes has offered him a room till he finds quarters; but he doesn't want to go there, even for a time—he's so beastly slow, you know. Besides, Havers says they're so awfully spoony, it's quite embarrassing to be within half a mile of them."

Laurie laughed.

"Fancy Snipes spoony! I remember the day the news came that he'd absolutely married Jakey how Eliot and I

roared at the idea. Eliot said, in that put-on solemn way of his, 'No, I *cannot* fancy Snipes married.' Well, I'll ask Dickson; I don't suppose he'll mind. Only he mayn't like the rooms to be used; it will seem unnatural for anyone but Eliot to be in them. Of course, Havers was in Dickson's house two years at Unapore. Oh, here he is! Dickson, here is poor old Havers turned up, without a hole to put himself in."

"Then he'd better come to us," said Dickson, without hesitation.

"You don't mind?" Laurie asked. He knew far better than Gore, or, for the matter of that, anyone else in the regiment, how intensely Dickson had felt the loss of his friend, and how he would shrink from the presence of another in the rooms he had brightened by Eliot's presence. "You don't mind?" he repeated.

"No; I'd rather Havers had the rooms than anyone else," Dickson answered. "Perhaps you'll tell him. I can't stop; the Major has just sent for me."

Therefore, a couple of hours later, Havers was settled down in the room in which Eliot Cardella had died, thankful to be spared the unpleasantness of living even for a time in the house of his senior, who had married Jakey Kensington-Smith.

Having had an immense and prolonged bath, a luxurious shave, and an entire change of clothing, Havers betook himself into the room, the largest in the bungalow, which was used as a general sitting-room, where he found Gore lying on a sofa half-asleep, Dickson reading a book, and Laurie just disposing of an iced peg, the sight of which set him longing for one also, notwithstanding that two foaming beakers had been emptied during the prolonged bath, which had made him feel more at peace with himself and his fellow-men than he had done for many days past.

"Shaving's made me thirsty," he announced, though, as he had not had the exertion of performing that operation for himself, the excuse was not a very good one. "Here—

why, by Jove, you've got old Satan yet! How are you, Satan? Tell Ramsee to bring a sherry and seltzer."

"Yes, Sahib," returned Satan, departing.

Havers put his hands in his pockets and lounged across the room to take a closer inspection of what to him was an unwonted sight—a real proper picture in a real proper frame hanging against the wall.

It was a photograph, of imperial size, of Eliot Cardella sitting on a table with his arms folded, one that had been done at Peshawur on the march to Caubool; a striking likeness, with eyes that looked straight out of the picture into yours, and a half-quizzical, wholly pleasant smile under the fair moustaches, as if he had just seated himself carelessly on the table, folded his arms, and said, "Now then, what are you staring at?"

"What a handsome fellow he was!" Havers broke out, after looking at the portrait for full ten minutes. "And it wasn't only looks—he was such a splendid chap every way."

Laurie dawdled across the room and stood by Havers, wistfully regarding the pictured face.

"Yes," he said at last, "thoroughbred from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet, thoroughbred all over;" and then he dawdled back to his lounge under the punkah and relapsed into silence.

"I think I never was so cut up," Havers said presently, when he had found himself a seat, "as I was when I got your telegram, Dickson. I had only just returned from town, where I had been three days, for his brother's wedding. I had dined two nights before at Lord Mallinbro's, and then I had to go up again and break it to them. I can tell you I wished it had been somebody—anyone rather than myself. It was a horrible business, no mistake about it."

"Did they take it so badly?" Dickson asked.

"Badly!" the other echoed. "Yes, very. I can't talk about it, but it was horrible. They hadn't been any too well pleased at Cardella's marriage, but when the smash came——"

"The smash—what smash?" cried Dickson and Laurie in one breath.

"What smash! Why—they're not together, that's all."

"Not together! what, Lord and Lady Cardella?"

"Lord and Lady Cardella—they weren't together a week—in fact, it was just four days. I can't tell you why, though I was there and heard the row, and saw all there was to be seen."

"Tell us the whole story, from beginning to end," said Laurie imperatively.

"Oh yes, if you like. You know Cardella was married on Saturday. Well, on Wednesday I got the telegram, and went up as soon as mid day stables were over—the telegram reached me about noon. I saw both Lord Mallinbro' and the Countess, and there was a regular scenc. Of course I couldn't tell them anything beyond the bare fact; but Lady Mallinbro' said directly that Eliot had caught his death by attending to Laurie during his illness—Eliot had spoken of it in his last letters. Well, they told me that Cardella was still in the Isle of Wight with his bride, and asked me to telegraph to him to return to town at once, and then to go and meet him and break the news to him. Of course I couldn't refuse anything they asked of me at such a time, so I went to meet Cardella when he arrived late that night. As soon as he saw me, he called out:

"'Hallo, Havers! you here! *You've* not come to meet me, have you? Something has gone wrong at home, but what I don't yet know.'

"'Lord Mallinbro' asked me to come and meet you,' I told him.

"'Really! I hope my mother's not ill?' he said, all in a hurry.

"I really don't know how I got him told, but I did manage to tell him somehow, why he had been sent for, and the awful news I had had from you that morning.

"I think I never saw a fellow so utterly unmannered in my life. He seemed as if he couldn't believe it. He kept

repeating his first words over and over again like a man in a dream, as if they were a foreign language that he couldn't understand, 'Eliot—dead. By the time we reached Eaton Square he had turned so ghastly white that I went into the house with him, though I had intended to leave him at the door, because, you know, one does not like to intrude one's self upon such trouble as they were all in. So I went in with him into the library, where we found Lord and Lady Mallinbro' and the family solicitor, who had come in answer to the note I had written to him for the Earl. Well, he had brought poor Eliot's will—made before he left England—and a letter, written at the same time, addressed to his brother. Cardella took it eagerly and tore it open, we four watching him as he read it. He looked puzzled for a minute—turned back to the beginning and read the first page again, frowning over it as if he couldn't make it out.

"What is it, Cecil?" Lady Mallinbro' asked, going towards him.

"He waved her off, holding her at arm's length, while he continued reading with such horror on his white face as I never saw, and as I hope I never shall see on any human face again. God only knows what there was in the letter; but all at once the Countess called out '*Cecil!*' and Cardella reeled and fell to the floor with a smash, fainted off as dead as any woman in a crowded theatre. Well, of course we picked him up, and after ten minutes or so we brought him round; but he never let go of that letter for an instant. Poor Lady Mallinbro' sat beside him, holding his head on her shoulder; his father stood watching him with a glass of water in his hand, and the lawyer and I looked helplessly on—I, for one, wishing myself very heartily out of the whole business. And there Cardella sat, leaning against his mother, with a face as white as chalk, clutching the letter, and saying over and over again, like a man in a dream: 'Oh, my God Almighty! what have I done—what have I done?'

"At last Lady Mallinbro' asked him if she might see



the letter? He looked piteously up in her face, and said :

“‘I have broken your heart, mother—don’t hate me, if you can help it ; you *cannot* blame me more than I blame myself ;’ and then he let her take the letter.

“Well, she read it over carefully, twice, and passed it on to the Earl.

“‘I think I will go to my room,’ she said, taking her arm from round Cardella’s neck. ‘I have had as much as I can bear.’

“Cardella called out, ‘Mother, mother!’ and then she turned back to him.

“‘I am very sorry for you, Cecil,’ she said, in a crushed monotonous voice. ‘I am very sorry for you. What your future life will be, I am afraid to think ; but you have made her your wife and must abide your choice—only, don’t bring her to see me ;’ and then her voice gave way, and she rushed out of the room crying bitterly.

“As for Cardella, he just fainted off again, and the Earl shoved the letter into his pocket, as if it wasn’t worth a moment’s consideration. He sent off for a doctor, and Cardella was got upstairs and into bed, and then the lawyer and I left the house.

“I only had a two days’ leave, so that I didn’t hear exactly how things were ; but before I left town Cardella was very ill indeed—brain fever or something of the kind. Lord Mallinbro’ was very nearly heart-broken. I saw him the morning I left, and he told me they were in the greatest anxiety and distress, but that the doctors thought, with care and the aid of a strong constitution, that Cardella would pull through. He didn’t tell me what was in the letter, and of course I could not ask him ; yet, without doubt, it was something to do with my lady the Viscountess. Anyway, three weeks afterwards, I got a note from the Earl thanking me for the little I had been able to do for them, and telling me they were going to take Cardella for a long cruise in the *Nymph*, in the Mediterranean.

"Then it oozed out in Canterbury that they had gone without my lady the Viscountess, and that she had never seen Cardella since the evening that he came up to town in answer to my telegram ; and I heard afterwards—just before I came away, in fact—that the lawyer had been sent down to tell her that Lord Mallinbro' would allow her five hundred a year on condition that she never attempted to see any member of the family again. Heaven only knows what that letter contained, but it must have been something that reflected not too well on my lady's character, or the Mallinbros never would have taken such strong measures.

"Oddly enough, the *Nymph* was at Valetta when we called there, and I went on board to see them. Cardella was better in health, but he looked very down in the mouth, poor chap ; and small wonder, for I believe he was over head and ears in love with that little jade who swindled him into marrying her. Well, that's all I know about it. Oh yes—yes—yes, Ramsee ; let me have my peg at once."

"Talking's made me thirsty," he announced, when the iced draught had found its way down the red lane that has no turning. "Give me another, Ramsee. Phew ! how hot it is ! one doesn't want half so much to drink at home."

"Oh, you'd want it at home to keep the cold out," laughed Gore.

Laurie, after one significant look at Dickson, stretched his arms out, sighing the while, clasped his hands at the back of his head, and lay in silence gazing at the punkah waving above him.

Dickson went on reading his book, and kept silence also ; but after mess that evening, when he was smoking his last pipe before going to roost, Laurie drew a chair up beside him and said :

"Dickson, have you any idea what was in that letter ?"

"Yes. It was to explain his reasons for leaving his property to you," Dickson answered. "He told me he had left such a letter, and evidently he has told Cardella the whole story without reservation."

There was a long silence, which was at length broken by Laurie.

"Dickson," he said hesitatingly, "It seems rather a mean thing to say, but I never should have been exactly easy if that woman had—had——"

"Hadn't got her deserts," Dickson ended for him, "neither should I."

"Well, you see her treachery gained so much for her, it was such a brilliant marriage to make, such a splendid position to attain; and after riding rough-shod over Eliot's heart as she did, it would not have been fair if she had gone on flourishing to the end of the chapter, now would it?"

"For my part," said Dickson thoughtfully, "the whole affair only makes me believe more firmly in what I always have believed—the theory of compensation. I don't care whether we do good or evil—we sow for our own harvests—we mar or we work out our own salvation. We carry our lives in our hands, and our lives are what we ourselves make them. It would be simply monstrous if this Ross woman had gone unpunished. She has completely wrecked two lives to satisfy her vanity and her ambition. Eliot laid his down, a cheerful martyr to the lie of a traitress. Cardella will have his martyrdom to live."

At that very moment Lord Cardella was thinking what Dickson, his brother's friend, had put into words, and wondering how long he could live the life he was then leading without going utterly mad?

The *Nymph* was steaming down the Adriatic, and Cardella was on deck, lying in a vast chair under the awning spread as a protection from the sun's hot rays. In his hand he held a letter which had reached them that morning—a letter from Dickson, enclosing a photograph of Eliot's grave, and the monument which had been erected by the regiment to his memory. The sight of her son's resting-place had upset Lady Mallinbro' completely, and her husband had gone below with her, leaving Cardella in possession of the picture, and utterly miserable.

Look which way he would, he could see no light—only dark wretchedness. Behind him there lay the long sunny years of his youth, when Eliot had been his best friend. Now Eliot was dead; his grave lay an impassable barrier between him and the woman they had both loved, an insurmountable block to those years, stretching far away into the future, which he had hoped to spend with the wife whom he had married.

How he loved her! Even in her falseness and the treachery for which he had put her away from him, he loved her still. And yet he could never see her again; not even for the woman he loved, the woman he had hoped would be the mother of the Cardellas, could he forgive the sacrifice of that brave life which had been given up in the very flower of its youth.

Nor was that all that he had against her—she had been the means of turning his heart against the brother he had always loved. She had begged him to keep their engagement a secret until within a month of the day fixed for the marriage, saying that Eliot had a prejudice against her, an intense dislike and distrust of her, and she was convinced if he knew his brother was going to marry her, he would try to make mischief between them—he would endeavour to part them.

Cardella, looking back from his present experience, knew very well that she had been afraid Eliot might tell him that she had acknowledged herself in love with Laurie—he thought scornfully how little she had known his dead brother's character; and then, with a pang of bitter remorse, he remembered that he, who had known Eliot with the close intimacy of strong and mutual affection from his boyhood, had been so infatuated as to believe her. For her sake, at her bidding, he had acted as if Eliot was capable—Eliot, the soul of honour—for a prejudice, a dislike, of trying to make mischief between his brother and his promised wife.

Yes. He had believed it, and he told himself he was justly punished. Why, he held in his hand the testimony

of a whole regiment to the worth of the brave heart he had doubted.

For this was the inscription written upon Eliot Cardella's grave :

“ERECTED  
BY THE OFFICERS, NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS,  
AND MEN OF THE  
ROYAL REGIMENT OF CUIRASSIERS,  
TO THE MEMORY OF THEIR COMRADE, THE  
HON. ELIOT CARDELLA,  
*Captain,*  
YOUNGER SON OF THE EARL OF MALLINERO',  
WHO DIED OF FEVER, FEB. 25, 18—,  
UNIVERSALLY REGRETTED.

*'He gave his life for the sake of his friend.'*”

Dickson's letter told how, when it became known that the officers had agreed to raise a monument to his memory, the non-commissioned officers and men had begged to be allowed to join them.

“A small proof,” Dickson ended, “of the universal love and esteem in which your son was held.”

And he had doubted him. During three months he had not written to him, leaving unanswered several letters which ended, “Why don't you write to me? What are you after?”

There were two letters in his desk now, which he would give half his life to answer as affectionately as they were written; but alas! it often happens as Dickson quoted to poor Eliot months before—

“He that will not, when he may,  
When he will, he shall have nay.”

It was so with Viscount Cardella. When he would fain have replied to those letters it was too late—the fingers which had penned them had been cold and stiff ere ever they had reached him—the frank eyes of the writer were

closed—the brave heart stilled—the faithful spirit had passed away, in all unconsciousness that the traitress, whose vanity and ambition had cost him his life, had even turned the heart of his only brother against him.

Looking back to the time of his first meeting with Liliass Ross, Cardella wondered that he had not seen at once how things were. He remembered it all so well now—how Eliot had persuaded her to sing—the song was ringing in his ears at that moment :

“If only the dead could find out when  
To come back and be forgiven.”

Lord Cardella groaned as the memory of that day came back to him—

“——come back and be forgiven.”

What ! for the offences they had never committed ? Ah ! if only Eliot could come back from his far-off Indian grave—not to be forgiven, but to forgive.

Useless wish ! The seed that is sown must come to harvest—sorrows wrought in the irrevocable past can never be undone. As Dickson said that very hour, “we sow for our own harvests—we mar or we work out our own salvation. We carry our lives in our hands, and our lives are what we ourselves make them.”

They had both wronged him--the man and the woman he had loved ; and, utterly without intent on his part, their punishment had come to them by his hand—the hand of the dead.

## WAFTE*D* FROM PARADISE.

THE Cuirassiers had been giving a dance, and the manner in which it had gone off was under discussion in the smoking-room of Dickson's bungalow ; they generally called the large room where the four officers sat by that name, though, as may be imagined, tobacco was not confined to those four tall whitewashed walls.

"I think it went off wonderfully well, considering everything," said Laurie ; "and oh ! I say, wasn't Jakey a swell ! Did you see the lace on her dress ? It must have cost a fortune—Snipes made her hold the tail out of harm's way all the time."

"And he wouldn't let anyone else dance with her," added Havers. "As if anyone wanted—scraggy little thing ! I hate scraggy women."

"I saw the Colonel dancing with her," put in Dickson. "A square, that is."

"Oh yes ! she graciously gave me a square," cried Havers. "At which I was just about as charmed as the Colonel looked. I say, what a terrible let-down that arm is ! if it had been the right instead of the left, he'd have to leave."

"Couldn't have held a sword. All the same, he's got a long head of his own. But he's only going to stay till his five years are up, and then he's going to leave the service—he says he feels he's no good now. Such humbug ! A head like his is worth five hundred Snipeses, who do nothing

but eat and draw their pay. Oh, what an ass Snipes is ! Dickson, did you see him spooning Jakey in the garden to-night ?”

Dickson made a face, more expressive than words, and Laurie rattled on :

“She came the excessively tender on me ; recalled all the happy days we spent together—*together*, if you please—at Canterbury. Said she hoped we should always be friends—*good* friends. It strikes *me* she finds Snipes and his spiritualism, and his spooniness combined, rather a bore.”

“And he’s so awfully spoony,” Dickson put in disdainfully. “Enough to make any woman think a man a bore. He never reads a book ; never looks at a paper ; never writes a letter ; never plays polo, football, cricket, billiards ; never dreams of playing tennis—afraid to ask any fellows there, I suppose, lest they should get talking to his wife ; in fact, the fellow seems to take absolutely no interest in anything but his spiritualistic humbug and spooning that wretched little woman. Gad, though, what an opinion the man must have of himself to intrude his company so persistently on her as he does !”

“Oh, well, Jakey did all the love-making beforehand,” said Havers.

“Yes, I’m sure of that,” added Laurie. “Jakey would go in for spiritualism, hot and strong, depend upon it.”

“She did,” Havers affirmed. “She’s every bit as bad as Snipes. I assure you we hadn’t got through the Straits before she found out I was one of the most powerful mediums she’d ever come in contact with. Now I may be a medium, but I didn’t quite see being mesmerized by Jakey.”

“By Jove, no !” Laurie exclaimed.

“I never told you about our little *séance* on board, did I ?”

“No ; had you one ?”

“Oh, we had several, but only one with any great results,” Havers answered. “You see, everybody pretty nearly believed in it, or said they did, just for the fun of the thing ;



but there was one small old chap, the chief commissioner at Oolhi—the most inveterate old snuff-taker I ever came across—who wasn't to be converted any way: a regular Philistine, and as good as told Snipes to his face he was an ass, who ought to be dropped overboard. Jakey tried all her fascinations on the old chap, but it wasn't any good; the old heathen wouldn't believe in anything."

"Perhaps he didn't particularly admire Jakey," suggested Laurie, who didn't admire her at all himself.

"That was just it. I said to him one evening when he'd been extra short to her, 'You don't seem to admire Mrs. Page, Mr. D'Arcy.' 'Well,' he said, taking a great pinch of snuff, 'I can't say I do particularly admire scaffold-poles myself.'"

"Scaffold-poles!" screamed Laurie. "Why, bless the old boy, what a splendid description! If I had racked my brains for a year, I should never have hit Jakey off so beautifully. Well, then, what about the *séance*?"

"Oh, the *séance*. Well, we had ever so many, and nothing transpired but a few knocks, half of which I made with my toe under the table. I don't believe in it a bit, you know, but I joined in it just for the fun, as everyone else did, excepting old D'Arcy, who used to sit by gibing and jeering and making half of us choke ourselves with laughter. Well, at last we were regularly set going—the lamps were turned down so that we could only just distinguish the outlines of the figures round the table, and there we sat, with our hands touching, as solemn and as silent as the grave. Presently the table began to turn, and then to knock. I hadn't anything to do with that, but I rather fancied somebody else had. For my part, I was quite occupied by a pretty little Philistine going out to join her parents at Bombay to trouble myself to knock—a very charming bright little girl; she was full of fun and mischief. Poor little soul, she died of cholera within three days of landing. I little thought that night, as we steamed across the Indian Ocean, I should be standing by her grave within a fortnight. Well, that's the

sort of incident one meets with in this beastly country ; still, I was sorry, poor little soul !

“Well, we agreed with the spirits that two knocks should stand for ‘No,’ and three for ‘Yes,’ and that if we spelt out the alphabet, they should knock at the letters they wanted, thus : ‘A, B,’—knock B. Then from the beginning again. ‘A, B, C, D, E,’—knock twice. ‘Bee’—don’t you see ? And then we began in right-down good earnest. We had several spirits, neither amusing nor instructive ; then a spirit more startling than the rest rapped out that his name was Henry Smith, and that he had come straight from Paradise. At this, a goose of a girl on the other side of the table shrieked out that she was afraid ; and indeed, I fancy most of us were quaking more or less. I know my heart was going like a steam-engine, and little Miss Crescy clutched hold of my hand and held it tight. Still we kept our hands in the circle ; none of us were so frightened but that we wanted to hear a little more. We asked all sorts of questions—Jakey first and foremost, of course.

“‘Good spirit,’ said she, ‘are there any flowers in Paradise ?’

“Three emphatic knocks on the table.

“‘Does the sun shine there, good spirit ?’

“Three more knocks.

“‘Dear me,’ struck in old D’Arey, who hadn’t said a word for full twenty minutes, ‘I always understood it did nothing of the kind.’

“A few of the Philistines sniggered at the remark, but the faithful did not condescend to notice such levity.

“‘Will you tell us, kind spirit,’ Jakey went on, as if she was reciting poetry at a penny reading, ‘if the blessed souls in Paradise are *per*-fectly happy ?’

“Three loud knocks.

“‘Then why did you come here ?’ I asked, at which old D’Arey called out, ‘Well done, my lad ; that’s a clincher.’

“But it wasn’t. The spirit of Henry Smith was non-plussed but Jakey was more than equal to the occasion.

“‘Did you wish to come?’ I persisted.

“‘Two knocks for ‘No.’

“‘Do not insult the good spirit, Mr. Havers,’ said Jakey, with reproachful dignity, whereupon the spirit, or somebody, set up a loud and prolonged rapping, which shook the table visibly.

“At this point a Roman Catholic lady asked if he could tell her whether her aunt Mary had got out of purgatory yet?

“‘Two knocks.

“‘Does that mean that she has not got out of purgatory?’ I asked.

“‘Three knocks.

“The Roman Catholic lady sighed.

“‘Poor Aunt Mary!’ Then, as if a thought had suddenly occurred to her, she asked, ‘Did you ever meet a Mrs. Watson there?’

“‘Yes.’

“‘Is she happy?’

“‘Yes.’

“‘A little woman with “cross-eyes”?’

“‘Yes.’

“‘Oh dear! do people take cross-eyes to Paradise with them!’ somebody exclaimed in crestfallen tones.

“‘To be sure; how would their friends know them else?’ some one else replied.

“‘How long have you been in Paradise?’ I asked. ‘Shall we count years?’

“‘Yes.’

“So we counted up to fifty-three, and then he rapped.

“‘Fifty-three years?’ I asked.

“‘Yes.’

“‘Then why did you come here?’

“The spirit maintained a dignified silence, but I wasn’t going to let him off in that way.

“‘Did you feel drawn to us?’

“‘Yes.’

“‘You perhaps thought we seemed unhappy down here,

and that you would come and tell us what a beautiful place Paradise is ?

“ ‘Yes.’ (Three quick cheerful knocks.) ‘That was very kind of you—we are extremely obliged to you,’ I said civilly, for really I began to think Henry Smith was a spirit more obliging than the average. ‘Now, as there are some unbelievers here’—I didn’t think it necessary to say I was one of ’em—‘could you not leave us some token of your presence ? We have heard of such things—a tress of hair—a brilliant light—a flower—so that we may be absolutely certain that you really are a spirit from Paradise ?’

“ ‘No.’

“ ‘You cannot do that ?’

“ ‘No.’

“ ‘But you would if you could ?’

“ Three loud thumps in reply.

“ ‘But could you not,’ Jakey suggested eagerly, ‘could you not, good spirit, waft us a perfume—some peculiar scent unknown on earth—that smelling once here, we should never be able to forget, but could recognise the instant we reach the everlasting fields of light ?’

“ The spirit said, ‘Yes !’

“ Now here I must tell you emphatically once more that I believed the whole thing to be humbug. Poor little Miss Crescy was rather frightened, for she clutched my hand tight, and she never once opened her mouth, and I must say, poor little woman, she was not given to either proceeding. As for Jakey, she went on questioning Henry Smith in as awe-struck tones as if she had been in the presence of a real ghost with his head under his arm.

“ ‘Then, dear spirit,’ she continued solemnly, ‘you will waft us this perfume ?’

“ ‘Yes.’

“ At this point I burst into a fit of smothered laughter ; all the others cried ‘Hush—sh—sh !’ just as if we had been in church. Not that it had the smallest effect upon me, for I simply roared.

"*I had heard the perfume coming.*

"They all said there was nothing to laugh at, and a moment later *it came.*

"*'Ah! Ehm—a—ah! Hey—ey—ah!'*

"Everyone sniffed up the air with a different expression, and the girl who had been frightened at first fainted clean away, as she sat with her hands clasped in her neighbours'

"Not that anyone took any notice—not the very least. Bless you, such trivial matters as swoons were as nothing compared with a perfume wafted all the way from Paradise. The girl might have died, poor little fool, for all the help any of them would have given her at that critical moment. They went on sniffing—they said it was unique—wonderful—perfect—fearful—awful—delicious—it was a foretaste of Elysium.

"One declared that it resembled the odour of violets, but that it had a something about it utterly unlike anything so gross and earthly as violets.

"Another likened it to holy basil, yet announced that it possessed a subtle sweetness peculiar to itself.

"A third compared it to passion-flowers, and one and all agreed that, were they to live for a thousand years ere they once more inhaled that perfect perfume, they would recognise it instantly. In fact, the most wonderful part of it all to me was the language they all used. I don't know that I ever heard so much tall talk in one half-hour before; such fine, high-faluting expressions they all used; their friends at home would hardly have known them, for they seemed one and all to have forgotten their everyday English and taken to poetry-phrases and blank verse.

"As usual, Jakey outshone everybody.

"*'I think,'* she cried enthusiastically—*'I think that were I gasping out my last breath, and at the point of death, the subtle power of that perfect perfume would revive me.'*

"*'I shouldn't at all wonder,'* I remarked drily, taking my hands off the table, and turning up the lamp. *'We'll try it on Miss Snowdon.'*

‘The little frightened fool opposite was just recovering from her faint, and looked as likely a specimen as could possibly be imagined for trying such an experiment.

“ ‘We have never thanked the spirit !’ some one cried.

‘Oh, there’s the spirit !’ I cried, laughing enough to kill myself, as I pointed to old D’Arcy, who sat blinking in his big chair—for we’d been more than an hour in the dark—grinning wickedly.

“ ‘Mr. D’Arcy ! Oh ! were *you* the medium ?’ Jakey asked.

“ ‘No ; he wasn’t !’ I yelled. ‘But he sent the perfume.’

“ ‘The perfume !’ in an incredulous chorus of a dozen voices.

“ ‘Yes ; that was what sent me off laughing. I heard the click of his snuff-box, and a minute later he sent a good big pinch flying all over everywhere. So I’ll tell you what, Mrs. Page, when you’re at your last gasp we’ll try what a snuff-box will do for you.’

“But would you believe it,” Havers ended : “the idiots looked blankly at one another for a moment, as if the crack of doom had sounded, and then they one and all declared it was nonsense ; I was trying to take a rise out of them. And to the very day we reached Bombay they gabbled rapturously of the subtle fragrance of the exquisite perfume which was wafted from Paradise.”

## *PALLAS ATHENE.*

### CHAPTER I.

MARCHMONT was writing an answer to a dinner-invitation at the desk in the ante-room just after lunch one day, more than half-attending the while to the conversation of two or three fellows still lingering round the hearth.

"Mr. Marchmont has the pleasure——" he began, when his attention was wholly drawn off to the chatter across the room.

"No ; I don't know how it is," Douglas was saying, "but he gets more and more Sphinx-like every day. I shouldn't at all wonder if he don't end by petrifying altogether, like that chap Mark Twain mentions in one of his books."

"Nor I," Stewart rejoined, with a laugh. "I say, now can you, any of you, fancy the Sphinx was ever a boy who stole apples and smoked on the sly ? I can't."

"Smokes hard enough now," put in Greville. "He always stinks like a tap-room on a market-day. I wonder that pretty little woman can stand it."

"And she is a pretty little woman ; no mistake about that," Douglas asserted. "And as to Hope's ever having been a boy, I can vouch for that—a jollier chap didn't live."

"By Jove, you don't say so !" the others exclaimed.

As for Marchmont, he just finished off his letter and went to join the group at the fire.

"I've known Hope all my life," Douglas went on. "We were at school together as little lads of that height," holding his hand some four feet from the ground ; "and then we

went to Eton, and then to Sandhurst, and then we tried our little best to get into the same regiment. However, that we couldn't manage, for he was gazetted to the Drab Horse, I to the Red Lancers. Of course, I lost sight of him entirely during the five years I was in India—that is, I never heard from him, though I knew he had exchanged into this regiment. I think I was more delighted at getting into the same regiment with him than I was at getting the Majority; and I don't know that I was ever so disappointed as I was when I found what an awful change had come over him, and a difference a few years had made in him. Ten years ago, he was one of the liveliest, most cheery go-ahead dare-devils in existence. Now—why, upon my soul, he's more like a low-church parson, with a bad digestion and something on his conscience, than anything I can think of. I call it simply pitiable to see a good man gone wrong in that way."

"I wonder what the deuce Miss Hawthorndean sees in him," said Greville thoughtfully.

Greville had more than once been suspected of an eye to Miss Hawthorndean himself.

"Lord knows," returned Curtis, shaking his head. "Women are queer compounds; you never know what will or won't please 'em—particularly in a man."

"No, faith; or what will or won't please a man in a woman," cried Douglas with a laugh, as he rose. "I wonder if there's some woman at the bottom of the change in Hope?"

"Never heard a breath of it."

"What's that photograph he has in his room?" Curtis asked. "I've often wondered; but Hope isn't the sort of chap one can ask questions of."

"Oh, it's a fancy sketch—he told me so," Greville replied. "Pallas Athene, I believe he calls it."

"Well, I must go—there's no rest for some poor devils," groaned Curtis, settling his forage cap on his head and clattering out with his sword trailing after him.



"Poor old Curtis! when he's on duty he leaves a regular stream of curses and maledictions behind him," said Douglas, with a good-natured laugh. "What are you going to do, Greville?"

"I thought of going down to call on the Westmacotts—they've been married three months, and I have never been yet."

"Neither have I. I think I'll go with you and get it done with," rejoined Douglas.

So the two went out together, and Marchmont turned back to the desk to write another letter, which was—well, not exactly concerning a dinner-party. He had scribbled as far as the third page, when Hope, who had been the subject of conversation, entered the room.

"Oh, you're here, Marchmont!" he said, in a tone which implied that he had been seeking him. "Are you busy?"

"Shall be done directly. Do you want anything?" he asked.

"Yes, I do rather, but——" looking round. "We can't talk in comfort here. Some of the fellows are sure to come in bothering. Come up to my room, will you, when you've done that?"

"All right," Marchmont answered. So, when he had finished his letter, he went up to Hope's room, to hear what it was that he wanted.

Hope was sitting by the window smoking, and Marchmont, having just been listening to the conversation about him, looked at him with perhaps more searching interest than he had ever done before.

"Yes, that man has a story," the younger soldier said to himself.

Lord Hope might be five-and-thirty—a very well-built active man about five feet ten in height, with cleanly-cut limbs, neat, smart feet, neither too large nor too small; with very black and smooth hair, an olive-coloured skin, which, had the eyes been very dark also, might have given him a foreign air. But the eyes were not dark, and he was

essentially an Englishman in appearance ; indeed, the eyes were grey, nor were they even of a dark shade, though the eye-lashes were very black. They were fine eyes, and they had a way of looking from under their long lashes with a speculative glance that seemed to go up and down and through whatever their owner looked at.

"Yes, he has a story," repeated Marchmont to himself, with much decision.

"Have a chair?" said Hope, pointing to one with his toe. "You see, Marchmont, these sports are coming off next week."

"Yes," said Marchmont.

"And Miss Hawthorndean wants to see them," Hope continued.

"Yes," said Marchmont again, not being particularly surprised at the communication.

"I don't suppose Sir Thomas will come, but of course Lady Hawthorndean will, and there'll be several visitors of theirs. Well, you see, I must give them some lunch, and as your room is next to mine——"

"Oh! yes, to be sure," Marchmont broke in. "You're quite welcome to it, of course. I'll tell Mrs. Thingum-te-catch to make it presentable."

"Thanks, awfully—it's very kind of you," said Hope, with his preoccupied absent air. "You see, the rooms here are wretchedly small ; and since you'll lend me yours, we'll lunch there, and come in here to see the sports. I'm sure I don't know why she wants to see them."

"Oh, ladies always like such things," Marchmont answered.

Then they fell to talking of other things, and somehow the attention of the younger man was drawn to the photograph Douglas and the other fellows had been talking about. Being young and tolerably endowed with assurance, he made no more ado of getting up and examining it, than he would have done of looking at the *Punch* on the ante-room table.

It was hung rather high above the chimney-shelf ; but Marchmont, who was one of the biggest men in the regiment, found it just on a level with his eyes, and so stood with his hands in his pockets and examined it at his leisure.

"Your sister, Hope?" he said, after a bit, taking his pipe out of his mouth to ask the question.

"No ; I never had a sister," Hope answered curtly. But at the same time, though the words were as few as possible, yet the tone was not forbidding, and was accompanied by a half-sigh that seemed to come up from the lowest depths of his heart, though it was, as it were, bitten off sharp ere it left his lips.

As for Marchmont, he just stood still staring at the photograph, which was certainly the most remarkable one he had ever seen. It represented a young and fair-haired woman dressed in white, an evening dress apparently of tulle or net, for the top of the low bodice and the short sleeves were all of soft puffings, the neck and arms were bare—such a neck, such arms!—fair and round, as if they had been cut out of marble, and decked with neither necklace nor armlets. Nor were there any rings on the firm, well-cut long hands. Of a truth, the original of the picture had been wise when she carried into effect the old adage, "When unadorned, adorned the most."

But though the large gracious figure was superb, its beauty was as nothing to the statuesque perfection of the face. The head was turned slightly aside, so that the dark mournful eyes looked out of the picture into space—great grey eyes that looked almost black, and contrasted strikingly with the beautiful dead-gold hair and the transparent pallor of the complexion.

Perhaps the ideal head of *La République* gives the best idea of her, or the words which, on a closer inspection, Marchmont saw were written in pencil beneath the figure and above the name, which told that the picture had been made in Rome.

“Pallas Athene, with her deep grey eyes,  
In modern garb and with her glorious hair  
Bound in a knot behind her shapely head,  
And her rich form, majestic, calm.  
Or the young Empress-Queen standing before  
Her wild Hungarians, when they cried—  
‘Pro rege nostro moriamur.’ ”

“She’s very handsome,” observed Marchmont, by way of getting at her history, if he could.

Lord Hope rose and went beside his comrade, where he stood looking at the picture in silence—a silence which lasted some minutes.

“I don’t know that she was very handsome,” he said at last; “but she was a grand woman.”

“*Was*?” echoed Marchmont; “why, is she dead?”

“Not that I know of,” Hope answered, sinking back in his chair and filling his meerschaum again.

“Oh! then she was somebody you——” but there Marchmont broke off short—not even his native impudence could go quite so far as to ask such an impertinent question as that.

But Hope did not seem to notice it.

“Some one I was in love with,” he ended for him. “Yes, I was—more hopelessly, miserably, desperately in love than any man ever was with any woman on earth.”

“Poor chap!” murmured Marchmont pityingly, altogether forgetting the ten years’ difference in their ages and the difference of their rank—army-rank, that is, of course.

“But it’s not possible she refused you, Hope?”

Hope’s grey eyes turned upon the younger man.

“I was engaged to her,” he said briefly, “and I lost her—through my own fault. So I have had to take the consequences, and I’m going to marry Miss Hawthorndean next month. There, Marchmont, that’s the whole story—nothing very wonderful about it, is there?” smiling at the other’s long face.

“But the lines,” Marchmont began, his curiosity raised to the highest pitch.

Hope laughed outright.

"Mere nonsense—all out of measure, and the blankest of blank verse—though they suited her well enough at the time they were written."

"But it seems such a pity," said the younger man eagerly.

"Oh, everything that comes of temper is a pity," Hope replied. "That charming little lady you introduced me to in town the other day may be thankful you have a good temper—I was always cursed with a bad one."

That was all Marchmont could get out of him. The momentary desire for some one to confide in, the craving for human sympathy which for an instant had assailed him, had passed away, and Hope was himself again—cold, grave, a little caustic, and utterly self-contained.

As I said, Marchmont was well, very well endowed with assurance, and he had also a tongue which blurted out almost everything that came into his head. On this occasion, neither his assurance nor his tongue failed him.

"It's a poor look-out for Miss Hawthorndean," he said bluntly.

"Just what I tell her," returned Hope; "but she won't be convinced—oh, women are queer compounds!"

Marchmont positively jumped at the words—just what he had heard Curtis say half an hour before.

"Well, I have to go to a tennis-party," he said abruptly "It will be all right about the room, Hope."

"Thank you, very much," Hope returned.

He sat where Marchmont had left him, for ever so long; his thoughts strayed away into that past where his happiness and his love lay dead, never to rise for him any more.

"It was all my fault—all," he groaned; "all my cursed temper. I couldn't expect her to overlook it—no proud woman would. And Nell was very proud—very, though I thought she loved me better than that. Yes! I thought she loved me better than that."

## CHAPTER II.

THE day fixed for the athletic sports of the 30th Dragoons had come—a glorious July morning, with a brisk, fresh breeze, which tempered the heat of the brilliant sun.

Liliminster Barracks were all in a flutter of expectancy and preparation; courses were being marked out; clowns were getting up themselves and their jokes alike—like the average of military clowns, accomplishing the first very well and the second very indifferently. Men who were going in for the full-marching-order competition were polishing helmets and buttons, pipe-claying facings and gloves, and carefully brushing uniforms.

It happened that Marchmont, who was orderly-officer for the day, had completed his round of the dinners and had been to the hospital, when Miss Hawthorndean, driving her father in a smart little cart, turned in at the gates and sent her pony spinning along to the officers' quarters, just as Marchmont reached the front-door thereof.

"Good-morning," he said, with a salute. "Good-morning, Sir Thomas. Shall I show you the way to Lord Hope's rooms?"

"Yes; do, please," Miss Hawthorndean answered. "Sir Thomas and I are before our time—half an hour, are we not? We drove over early to let Lord Hope know what a heap of people are coming—there are no fewer than seven, not counting Sir Thomas and myself."

"Oh, he will be able to accommodate them," Marchmont answered easily.

"Do you think so? He said they were such very little rooms. You have lent him yours, haven't you, Mr. Marchmont?"

"Yes; I have."

"Then we shall be guests to both of you, shall we not? There are mamma and Gwen—you've met my sister, have you not?"

"Yes ; I have had the pleasure," Marchmont replied.

"Yes ; I thought so, though I remember she was always away when you have dined with us. Well, then there are the spoons, who will make four."

"The spoons !" repeated Marchmont, pausing half-way up the stairs and looking at her with perplexed eyes.

"Yes—the most ro-mantic story you *ever* heard," said Miss Hawthorndean impressively. "They came last night, *quite* unexpectedly. I only knew they were coming two hours before, and they're engaged, you know. It's most ro-mantic. *She* is a great friend of mine, but I haven't seen her for ages ; for she has been two years—no, three, I think—in New Zealand for her lungs, or her chest, or something, and *he* has been in India five or six years—all through the Afghan campaign and *cov*-ered with glory and medals. His name is Dickson. Major Dickson of the Cuirassiers—at least, of the White Dragoons now. Well, he has been in love with her, goodness only knows besides himself how many years ; but unfortunately, poor darling, she was engaged to somebody else, who behaved *abominably* to her. I forget his name, if indeed I ever heard, for she never talks about it if she can help it. Well, this pair actually met in an hotel at Bombay, where she and her mother were staying a few weeks on their way home from New Zealand ; and actually they made it up there and then, and they're going to be married directly. I didn't know anything about it till she telegraphed that they were coming, though, of course, I knew she had returned to England, and she had promised to pay me a visit before I leave home. She's such a darling !"

"And they're very spoony ?" said Marchmont, laughing.

"Oh, well, Major Dickson is very spoony—horribly so ; but Miss Vansittart—oh, well—she's—not—er——" she broke off short there, and Marchmont laughed again.

Then, as they walked down the corridor, Lord Hope, who had heard their voices, came out of his room.

"You are come, then," he said, taking his *fiancée's* hand. "Welcome to bachelor quarters."

"Very comfortable-looking quarters too," Miss Hawthorndean remarked, standing in the middle of the room and spinning slowly round. "Are they not, papa? And what flowers! I did not know you were so fond of flowers, Cecil."

"I got them in your honour," answered Hope, smiling at her.

"How nice of you," crossing the room towards the fireplace. "What a smart chimney-shelf! and—— *who* is that?"

Sir Thomas, who had been in the army himself, and was keenly interested in all that concerned it, was already buried in a military journal which he had found lying on the side-table. Marchmont, who was standing behind him, and therefore behind Miss Hawthorndean also, saw a sudden frown pass over Hope's dark brows.

"No one you ever knew, Dorothy; but a lady I knew a long time ago," he answered lamely, and thinking, just as Marchmont thought, what a fool he had been not to take the picture down.

"Were you—ever—engaged to her?" Miss Hawthorndean asked, in so low a voice that though Marchmont guessed her meaning, he did not catch the words.

"What an absurd idea!" exclaimed Hope, in a vain attempt to hide the truth. "What ever put that into your head, Dorothy?"

"Nothing at all," said Dorothy Hawthorndean, and turned away from the picture, as if the sight of it had sickened her. "I will sit here," seating herself on a sofa (a bed really) which stood between the two little windows. "Show me your photograph-book, Cecil."

"The carriage has just turned in at the gate," Hope answered. "Must I not go down and meet your mother?"

"Mr. Marchmont will go; stay here, *please*," Miss Hawthorndean urged, in a voice so pleading that Lord Hope obeyed her, and brought the book without a word.

As soon as Marchmont had left the room, she cast one



hurried glance at Sir Thomas ; and seeing that he was still engrossed by the journal, turned to her lover and laid her hand on his.

"Cecil," she said, in a trembling voice, "something is going to happen."

"My dear child, what *can* happen?" he asked soothingly, wondering why she had grown so nervous all at once.

"But I tell you something is," she persisted. "I want to tell you to let nothing surprise you."

But Hope turned and looked at her in such unmitigated surprise, that the girl's dark eyes filled with tears ; and she turned her head aside, just as her mother and Marchmont entered the room.

"We have brought you such a host of visitors, Cecil," she said, smiling. "Some you have seen, and some you have not. Oh, here are Miss Ogilvie and Lady Grace."

"Welcome to bachelor quarters," said Hope, wondering the while what on earth was the matter with Dorothy.

Lady Hawthorndean looked back through the door.

"Ah ! Major Dickson, Cecil, Major Dickson of the White Dragoons—that's the regular form of military introduction, is it not ?"

"I don't know," said Hope, smiling. "Very glad to see you ; how do you do ?"

"How do you do ?" repeated Dickson, with equal friendliness.

"Gwen, and Miss Vansittart," said Lady Hawthorndean smilingly to Lord Hope.

Dorothy, watching him closely, saw that at the sight of her friend, the olive hue of his face faded to a sickly white which spread even to his very lips ; then, by an immense effort, he went a step forward, and held out his hand.

But Nell Vansittart's composure was not so great : ere she could touch the outstretched fingers, she reeled and fell headlong to the ground in a faint.

Of course, there was then a tremendous commotion.

Lady Hawthorndean and Dickson lifted her up and got her on to a chair, while Hope stood looking helplessly on, the very picture of dismay. It was Marchmont who fetched water and champagne-cup out of the adjoining room—though, if he had known it, brandy would have answered the purpose better—it was Marchmont who thought of administering a bumper of cup to little Miss Hawthorndean, who still sat on the sofa-bed, holding on bravely for dear life, lest she too should faint off, and so make confusion utterly confounded.

“What made you faint like that, my dear?” Lady Hawthorndean asked, in her kind way. “Is this room too warm? I did not notice it myself. Cecil, I think you have too many flowers for this small space.”

Just at that moment, Dickson, bending over Miss Vansittart, said in a low voice, “You are better now, my darling?” and the words brought Lord Hope all at once to his senses.

“I got the flowers for Dorothy,” he replied to Lady Hawthorndean’s remark. “Dorothy, will you mind if your decorations are removed for the present? Why,” sitting down on the cot and taking the tumbler, still half full of cup, from Marchmont, who was standing anxiously regarding her—“Why, how this has upset you! Drink a little more of this, my darling. How odd! You said something was going to happen, and I laughed at you. I won’t laugh at your prophecies any more. I think you have the gift of second-sight, my child.”

“Second-sight,” echoed Dorothy, with a shivering. “Yes, Cecil, I think I have the gift of second-sight.”

Hope lifted his black brows inquiringly, as if she was speaking in riddles, quite beyond his power to solve, as if he was entirely at a loss to understand her; but Marchmont, who had taken in the whole situation in an instant, saw that he winced as if he had received a blow. He rose abruptly from the cot, and went across the room to Lady Hawthorndean’s side.

"Is Miss Vansittart sufficiently recovered to go in to lunch?" he asked.

"Oh yes—yes; I am quite well now," Miss Vansittart answered, avoiding his eyes.

"Then may I give you my arm?" Lord Hope said, addressing Lady Hawthorndean.

The party was a failure—a complete failure. Miss Vansittart scarcely spoke a word during the whole lunch, and seemed so upset and unwell that her hostess suggested that Major Dickson should drive her home in Dorothy's cart, at which proposal she caught eagerly; and, as may be imagined, Dickson needed no second hint to urge him to turn his back on Liliminstor Barracks and the sports of the 30th Dragoons.

And Dorothy Hawthorndean, who was out and out thoroughbred from the top of her dark curly head to the soles of her wee little feet, went into lunch with Marchmont, and plucked up her spirits and behaved like a brave little gentlewoman, as she was, laughing in her own gay light-hearted way, talking in her odd breathless emphatic fashion, appealing every now and then, "Ce-cil, now *don't* you think so and so," just as Hope had always known her to do; so that Hope himself was mightily relieved, and flattered himself she had not connected the portrait of Pallas Athene in any way with the headlong manner in which Nell Vansittart had expressed her surprise at meeting with him again.

But in spite of Miss Hawthorndean's pluck, and the sympathetic way in which Marchmont backed up her efforts, as he himself said, by talking until his jaws ached, the whole affair was wofully flat. Even after "the spoons" had gone, nobody seemed able to get up any interest in the sports. Not that they were below the average of military athletic sports. There were flat races and hurdle races, sergeants' races and officers' races, tugs of war both of men and boys, races of men tied up in sacks and men with legs together, spring jumping and running high jumps; in

short, there were the usual items which go to make up the whole of a regimental display of athletic sports. But to the majority—at least to the most important actors in this story—the whole concern was flat, stale and unprofitable. Dorothy laughed loudly at the clowns, whose idea of extreme funniness seemed to be to call every person of the gentle sex who came within speaking-distance by the time-honoured title of “mother;” yet the girl was growing tired of making-believe to be gay, and the laughter towards the end of the entertainment grew very unmirthful indeed. Lord Hope certainly did his very best: he sat at the same window with Dorothy, his arms on the sill and a box filled with shillings on the ledge before him, pointing out to her which men were in his troop, which were first-rate soldiers, and which were black sheep, explaining everything there was to explain, and breaking off every now and then to shout—

“Hallo, Jackson! you won a first prize? Well, you must have an extra shilling for that;” or, “Why, Short, you beaten? Did that knee let you down? Well, you must have a couple of shillings for that.

“I always give a few pounds away on occasions like these,” he said to Dorothy.

“How pleased he looked!” she said, when one flushed dragoon in jersey and drawers had gone limping away.

“Yes—poor chap! I was walking back to barracks behind him one day in the winter, and he came down on a piece of orange-peel—a regular smash. I had to call a cab to get him home. It lets him down every now and then, as it did just now.”

He did not add, as he might have done, that he had helped the man into that same cab and taken him up to the hospital himself; but Dorothy Hawthorndean could see for herself *that* the Sphinx, if puzzling to his brother-officers, was very popular with his men.

So all the afternoon she sat beside him, while he exerted himself to please her, more, perhaps, than he had ever done;

the forced laughter died on her lips, and she grew quiet, suffering Hope to hold her hand in his, as she felt for the last time, while the band outside played Waldteufel's "*Au Revoir*." The pleasant swinging air sounded like a dirge to Dorothy Hawthorndean's ears, for to her it was not *au revoir*, but *good-bye*.

### CHAPTER III.

'NELL, may I come in?' said Dorothy Hawthorndean two hours later, as she knocked at her visitor's door.

"Certainly," was the reply, and Nell herself opened it. "Oh! you're dressed already, Dorothy."

"Yes; I dressed quickly, for I wanted to see you," said Dorothy; then added abruptly, "Send your maid away, will you?"

"Of course. Parker, you can come up again five minutes before dinner, to see if there is anything I want. Now, Dorothy dear, what is it?"

Dorothy Hawthorndean had drawn a chair to the window and was leaning against the sill, her fingers idly pulling off the petals of a great creamy rose that grew just within reach: her dark eyes fixed absently on one of the loveliest views in England, but in which, like the years of life that lay before her, she saw no beauty at that moment.

"You are better, Nell?" she said at length.

"Oh yes, dear, quite. It must have been the overpowering scent of those flowers that made me faint like that," she answered, "after that quick drive through the fresh air."

"I don't think it was the scent of the flowers at all," said Dorothy in a very quiet tone.

"What do you mean?" her friend asked.

"You know, Nell, I came in here last night for a talk—about our engagements."

"Yes, dear," brushing away at the masses of gold-coloured hair, and avoiding Dorothy's eyes altogether.

"I wanted to hear all about Major Dickson," Dorothy continued, "and to tell you all about—Lord Hope."

Nell Vansittart brushed away vigorously without speaking, and Dorothy went on.

"I asked you, Nell, if you were not very happy, and you did not answer. And I said, 'Are you still thinking of that other one—that Mr. Brooke—you—were—engaged to—a long time ago?' And you began to cry, Nell—you confessed that you *could* not forget him, though you had been trying to forget him for six or seven years—you *could* not help loving him still. And though he cast you off without an instant's hesitation because you disobeyed him, yet, if he came to you blind and lame, and deaf and dumb, you would still take him back and *adore* him."

Nell Vansittart was braiding the gold-coloured hair then, and did not lift her eyes from the broad shining plait. Presently, Dorothy continued:

"I was so sorry for you, Nell, because, as I told you, I believe it would break my heart if anything like that came between Lord Hope and myself; and then I told you that nothing ever could so come between us, because he never would ask me to do anything I did not wish, and I should never dream of refusing to comply with a wish of his. Ah, well! I think you might have told me, Nell, that you knew the whole world was coming between us—yes, I think you might have told me."

"I did not know," Nell broke out. "You were more likely to know than I. I have been away for three years, and had no idea he had become Lord Hope. And as to the whole world coming between you—why should it do that? Are you so proud, Dorothy, that you will break your engagement because he was once engaged to me?"

"No; but because he was, and is—and you were, and are—in love with each other, as men and women only love once in their lives," Dorothy answered.

"Your love—your feelings——"

"Never mind my love or my feelings—the mischief that is done cannot be undone. Do you think, Nell," she cried scornfully, "that I would *con*-descend to marry a man whose

heart was given to somebody else? No—a thousand times no! I should fret myself into my grave in a month. I might have known he cared nothing for me; he only asked me to marry him because he saw I liked him. I ought to have known all along what the absent air and continual deference to my wishes meant—but I did not.”

“If I had only known,” Nell Vansittart groaned, sinking down on her knees by the table, like a living statue in an artistic attitude as Dorothy thought, remembering her own little smart trim figure, that was pretty but not the least bit statuesque. “If I had only known—if I had ever guessed—suspected that they were one and the same man, I would have gone a thousand miles away, I would indeed. I never heard he had inherited a title—I did not know he had the least chance of doing so. Oh, if we had only stayed in New Zealand, then I should have been out of the way of them both. But Dorothy, though I admit—and in the face of what I, like a long-tongued fool, told you last night, I cannot pretend that it is otherwise—that I love him yet, as much as I ever did, I do not, on my honour, believe he cares anything for me. I will tell you the exact circumstances under which we parted. We were staying, all of us—that is, Mother, Constance, and I—at Bullidean, with the Gylglens, and Cecil Brooke was there also. One day we went on a picnic, and I somehow slipped into a swollen stream and got up to my waist in water. I tried to laugh it off, and said I must go back to Bullidean at once, when Cecil called out very roughly that I was to do nothing of the kind, but must go into a wretched little cottage at hand and get dried as soon as possible. I dare say he was very anxious; but when I demurred, he said out loud before everyone, that if I did not do as I was told he would never speak to me again. And I went back. I jumped into the dog-cart and drove back six miles to Bullidean by myself, and I never saw Cecil Brooke again, until this afternoon. I need hardly tell you, Dorothy that I repented my foolishness before I had driven half a mile. I was so horribly ill by the time I got to the house,

that I could not walk upstairs by myself, and I was down with inflammation of the lungs by midnight. My obstinacy nearly cost me my life. But Cecil Brooke never relented in the least ; he left Bullidean before dinner, and he never even sent to ask after me. I never heard a word of or from him, from that day to this. Now, do you honestly think that man loved me ?”

“Yes, I am sure of it,” Dorothy answered, steadily. “Quite sure of it. You see, Nell, it was this way : you called him Mr. Brooke always, and as the Hope family name is Towers, and that of Brooke only assumed by Cecil, it never occurred to me to connect the two. So, when I went into Cecil’s room and saw your photograph hanging on the wall, it suddenly came back to me, that though the late lord’s daughters and Cecil’s brothers are all called Towers, yet I had once heard that Cecil, years before, had taken the name of Brooke to inherit property, and then I knew he was the one you were engaged to before you lost your voice. So when you came in I did not look at you, for I knew only too well what you thought. I looked at him, and——”

“And——” repeated Nell anxiously.

“I saw my death-warrant, Nell,” said Dorothy Hawthorne quietly. “In my own heart I gave him up to you at that moment. There is only Major Dickson to be considered now.”

At the mention of Dickson’s name, Nell broke down altogether.

“I don’t know what to do. Dolly—Dolly—Dolly ! he has loved me for years—he loves me ! He loved me when I had lost my voice and could not speak above a whisper—when Cecil cast me off. I don’t know what to do.”

“You must tell him the whole truth,” said Dorothy. “I’ll tell him if you dare not.”

“No, Dolly ; you have taken too much upon you as it is—more than you have strength for,” Nell cried pitifully, taking her friend’s two little cold hands in hers.

“I shall pull through somehow.”



"And you will hate me."

"I think not. Why should I? Did he not belong to you first?"

"But George—how shall I face him? I wish I had never been born," the other broke out passionately.

"A very useless wish, Nell," answered poor Dorothy, freeing her hands and rising from her seat.

"If only George would fall in love with you!" Nell cried.

A look of intense and utter scorn flashed into Miss Hawthorndean's brown eyes—not at the idea of Dickson as a lover, but at the weak readiness with which the girl, who had once been her friend, caught at any idea which would give her back her old love and leave her free to marry Lord Hope. There was certainly a wide difference between the two girls' characters: Nell Vansittart was the same Nell Vansittart who had refused Dickson's love six years before without the slightest consideration for his feelings in any way; who had cried out in her weak passionate way that if he, Towers-Brooke, came back to her blind and lame, and deaf and dumb, she would still take him and *adore* him; there was still in all her actions the same obstinate weakness that had made her shut herself up from the world and lead practically the life of a recluse. Dorothy, looking at her with that mighty scorn blazing in her eyes, wondered how it had ever come about that a spirit so weak and obstinate had found a dwelling-place in so grand and gracious a person.

And yet, a very keen observer of human nature would probably have seen what was preferable in Dorothy Hawthorndean's expression and manner—the straightforward open frank gaze of the clear brown eyes; the gay hearty laughter; the keen, quick wit; the way in which the horses in the stables turned their soft eyes upon her; the way in which dogs tugged at their chains, and little children ran to touch her dress, that they might make their bow as she passed down the village street; the brave, cheery, plucky way in which she could face a difficulty, whether of physical

or moral nature : of a truth, she was the same plucky little Dolly who, fifteen years before, had been tumbled off a high wall by the eldest boy, who had picked her up bruised and stunned in an absolute agony of contrition and fright.

"Never mind, Tom," Dolly said, choking back her tears. "You didn't mean to."

It is a great many years since a certain sentence was written, but human nature is the same, and it holds good yet—"The child is father of the man."

Dolly Hawthorndean had been a brave, true, fearless child, and she showed herself a brave, true, fearless woman, now that the most horrible trouble of her life had fallen upon her.

"If only George would fall in love with you!" Nell repeated.

"You think I might transfer my affections without any trouble," said Dorothy. "Ah! but, you see, it is you whom he wants," smiling sadly. "You have won both their hearts; and I, like a lone sparrow on the house-top, am not wanted by either of them."

"I will have neither of them," Nell cried.

"Oh yes," said Dorothy wisely; "you will have Lord Hope, and Major Dickson and I will go to the wall."

"It seems very mean to take advantage of your generosity," Nell said, clasping her bracelets on her white arms.

Dorothy wondered bitterly how she could think of bracelets and love-knots at such a moment.

"But you'll get over it, Dolly dear, and some day you'll be very glad I saved you. You see, *I* have been in love with him for years."

Evidently the show of resistance was at an end; there could be no drawing back for Dorothy then; the sacrifice was accepted. She saw that from Nell's sudden change of tone, when she had said so bitterly that she would have Lord Hope, and Major Dickson and herself would have to go to the wall—a change from feeble resistance of absolute

possession of Lord Hope, which made Dorothy feel faint and sick.

But she was a brave little woman. She had set herself a task, and she carried it out unflinchingly. Leaving Nell Vansittart, she went down to the drawing-room, where she found Lord Hope alone. It still wanted a quarter of an hour to the time for dinner.

"You have a headache, Cecil," she said, when she had looked at him.

"I have, rather," he answered.

"Let me cure it for you," she said, speaking in as unconcerned a tone as if she had said, "Let me take that bit of thread off your sleeve."

"If you can," putting his arm round her.

"Oh, I can do that," confidently. "Hold out your hand."

Lord Hope did so, and Dorothy laid the diamond ring, which had been the badge of her engagement, on the outstretched palm.

"What does this mean?" he asked with a great start.

"It means, Cecil," speaking very lightly, "that you and I have made a mistake. Instead of marrying me, you are going to marry Miss Vansittart. She has told me all, and I give you up to her."

"Dorothy, do you love me?" he asked, surprise and reproach mingling in his tones.

Dorothy shook her head.

"Not a bit," she returned promptly. The flippancy of her tone was a good deal overdone, but Hope was too much disturbed to notice it.

"You don't care for me at all, Dolly; not a little bit?" he asked.

He had never called her Dolly—the long-disused name of her childhood by which only her brother Tom ever addressed her—the sound of it very nearly upset her altogether, and she could only shake her head in reply.

"I thought you were awfully fond of me," he said forlornly.

"Quite a mistake," said she briskly. "You asked me, you know, and you were Lord Hope, and—and—I thought it a pity to refuse you."

"Well, I'll be shot!" he exclaimed blankly.

"There are plenty of other good matches in the world, you know," Dorothy went on, thinking miserably the while that if he cared the twentieth part of one poor scruple for her, he would see how put on all this was. "You needn't think about me. Tell everyone I changed my mind, and that Miss Vansittart took pity on you—be sure you tell Sir Thomas so. I shall like the *éclat* of it."

"*Dorothy!*" Lord Hope cried.

"Your way is quite clear," she hurried on, afraid every moment that she would break down, and betray herself. "There is only Major Dickson to be considered now, and Nell will tell him herself."

"Oh! well, it is better he should find it out now than have got married first," said Lord Hope coolly. "I don't believe in a marriage without love on both sides, Dorothy." And then the door opened, and one or two of the guests came in, creating a diversion—for which Dolly was intensely grateful. Poor brave little woman! She thought no one had ever got mixed up with such a heartless lot before.

Then Miss Vansittart appeared, looking gloriously handsome, a smile on her lips, and a blaze of light in her eyes. She was utterly transformed, and Dorothy's aching heart ached yet more for sympathy, when, a few minutes later, Major Dickson entered, in all the flush of his as yet unruffled happiness. She looked at him with curious, pitying eyes, and wondered at the contrariety of human nature—why, when this handsome, brown-skinned, blue-eyed fellow, with the grace and strength that a man has after five-and-thirty years of perfect health; with his frank, winning manner; his dark silky hair, that would have been curly if he had not kept it cropped like a convict; his quick, gracious tongue—why, when he had been openly and honestly in love with her for years and years, Nell could not be content

with him, but must needs hanker so persistently after Lord Hope, who had jilted her. And then she looked across the room at Hope, and her heart told her why. Then her gaze wandered back to Dickson, standing by his stately *fiancée* with a proud proprietorial air.

"It's very hard upon him, poor fellow," said Miss Hawthorndean to herself, thinking how soon the happy light would be quenched out of the blue eyes. "Yes, it will fall hardest upon him, for he has loved her for years."

She was seated at dinner a long way from either of the spoons. Marchmont took her in, and they sat immediately opposite to Hope, who had taken his hostess in, and had Gwen Hawthorndean on his left hand. Suddenly, in the middle of the entertainment, Gwen noticed her sister's half-hoop of diamonds upon Hope's little finger.

"Why are you wearing Dorothy's ring?" she asked thoughtlessly.

"Going to buy the wedding-ring to-morrow," returned Hope promptly.

Instinctively Marchmont looked aside at Miss Hawthorndean, and saw that her eyes were filled with tears.

"She has given him up," he thought; and then he added, "What a heartless brute he is!"

But the girl was pluck to the backbone. She turned round to Marchmont a moment later as if nothing had happened. "I thought you were on duty to-day, Mr. Marchmont," she remarked.

"So I was, but I got leave," he replied; not adding, as he would have done had they been in the Palace of Truth, that he had asked for the leave he obtained, simply because he wanted to see the end of the scene he had witnessed in the morning.

"I see; well, we are very glad you were able to get leave," Dorothy answered.

She never once looked at Hope, though Hope certainly looked a good deal at her, noting for one thing that she ate next to nothing.

Only once did Dorothy lift her eyes to his before she left the room, that was when she passed him to go to the door. Then she stopped and said in a very low voice :

"Tell Sir Thomas before he comes into the drawing-room ; he will take it better than at any other time." Then before he could answer, she had passed on in the wake of the other ladies.

"Come out on to the veranda," she said to Nell Vansittart, when they reached the drawing-room. "I have told Cecil."

"Yes."

"I have given him up," closing her eyes, and leaning her head back against the wall of the house.

Miss Vansittart looked at her, but though she saw the worn and weary curves of the mouth, though she knew the girl's heart was breaking, she made no attempt to avert the sacrifice.

"You will get over it after a while, Dorothy," she said, by way of consolation.

"Well, that is my affair," returned Dorothy sharply, then rose and went into the house.

When the men came into the drawing-room, she was not to be seen ; but Dickson found Miss Vansittart still on the veranda, and took her away down a secluded shrubbery, to be told his fate.

He had not expected it in the least ; he had had no warning that Lord Hope was in any way connected with the Towers-Brooke to whom she had once been engaged ; he had, indeed, had no warning that she was still thinking about him.

But Dickson, Major of the White Dragoons, had quite as much pluck as Sir Thomas Hawthorndean's daughter ; he took his blow like the brave gentleman he was.

"Very well, Miss Vansittart, you shall have your freedom," he said, when she had finished her story. "You and Lord Hope have taken a right royal road to happiness ; I trust you will have it. You need not let a thought of me

disturb it. I have loved you for years, but *you have cured me*. But, if I were you, I should think of the *friend*, into whose house you came as a guest, whose happiness you have wrecked."

"I don't think she cares much," she put in.

"Pooh! she adores him—loves him as you don't know how to love—loves him so that she can sacrifice her life's happiness for his. He is making a bad exchange, Miss Vansittart; and he will find it out one of these days. By the heavens above us, she is worth a thousand such women as yourself!" and then he turned away, and she went back to the house alone, and *almost* in tears. As for Dickson, he rounded a group of shrubs and walked right into Lord Hope's arms.

"You'll perhaps forgive my having listened, Dickson," he said coolly. "Very dishonourable, I know; but you see, I was interested in what you had to say."

"Oh, the whole world may hear it," returned Dickson defiantly. "I'll tell you what it is, Lord Hope; you've made a nice mess of it."

"I beg your pardon," said Hope quietly. "I have not made a mess of it at all. Look here, Dickson: you're angry and disappointed and sore, but you'll get over this; and you'd a devilish sight better find it out now, than find it out after the knot is tied. I know you're over head and ears in love with her—Dolly told me all about it; but you'll get over it after a while, and then you'll find a woman who is plucky enough to think of some one else besides herself, and you'll be thankful;" and then he gave Dickson's arm a friendly pat and squeeze, and left him.

The first person he came across in the drawing-room was Gwen—the second daughter of the house.

"Gwen, where's Dolly?" he asked.

"In the boudoir—I think she has a headache," Gwen answered.

"Thanks."

He found his way to Lady Hawthorndean's special

sanctum, speaking to several people as he went ; and there, when he opened the door, he discovered Dorothy leaning her head on her hands, with her handkerchief held to her eyes. Hope went coolly up to her and took forcible possession of hands and kerchief.

"Look here, Dolly," he said, with that preoccupied air which had gained him the name of the Sphinx amongst his brother-officers. "This won't do ; what do you mean by coming in here by yourself and crying ?"

"I've got toothache," asserted Dolly valiantly.

"You told me yesterday you had never had toothache in your life," he said, laughing. "Suppose I try to cure it, as you cured my headache before dinner. Here," slipping the diamond ring on to her finger. "Don't give me that back again—I don't want it."

"What do you mean ?" she asked, a sudden joy flooding into her eyes.

"I mean that I wouldn't exchange my brave little Dolly for all the Miss Vansittarts in the world. I let it go on because I thought Dickson ought to be undeceived. I gave Miss Vansittart up at Bullidean, six years ago, and I have no intention of asking her to take me back again."

"But you love her ?" Dorothy cried.

"I beg your pardon—nothing of the kind. I did, heaven help me, up to this very morning. I loved an ideal Nell Vansittart, who never lived except in my heart. I knew all along that it was only an ideal, but I did not know until within the last hour how far below it the real woman was, or how far above it are you. I heard her tell Dickson—and none too sparingly of his feelings—that she had told you all. Well, I felt six years ago, that if a woman who professed to love a man devotedly, would, because he was anxious about her, flatly disobey him to the extent of risking her life, that was not the woman with whom to be happy. I admit that I glossed her conduct over to myself, that I told myself I had been wrong—hard—all the rest of it ; now I say it may have been so, yet I thank God for it."



"And you really love me a little?"

"Not a little, but infinitely more than I ever loved even the ideal," Lord Hope replied. "And so, Dolly, please, we won't have any more headaches, toothaches—which were they?"

"Heartaches," said Dolly, in a whisper.

That night, Lord Hope took the photograph which had excited his comrade's attention out of its frame, and looked at it long and closely.

"Pallas Athene is described as having a face beautiful, thoughtful, earnest and majestic," he muttered. "What ever could I have been thinking of to ascribe all those charms to Nell Vansittart. She has only a very perfect mask, behind which there lurks the most heartless, weak, obstinate soul that ever was called by the name of woman."

The next morning Marchmont strolled in whilst Hope was dressing.

"Hallo!" said he, "what have you done with Pallas Athene?"

"Burnt her," Hope answered. "Regular *auto da-fé*. By George! but the cool way she let that poor devil Dickson down last night sickened me. I realized all in a minute what a fool I have been."

"And Miss Hawthorndean?" Marchmont asked.

"Marchmont," Lord Hope answered, "I'm the luckiest man that ever lived on the face of the earth."

"That's all right," said Marchmont heartily. "I'll shake hands with you, if you don't mind, Hope." And so the two clasped hands, as sometimes men do—hard.

## COMPENSATION.

### CHAPTER I.

WHEN Dickson found himself in the railway-carriage, spinning away from Liliminster, he did what perhaps nine hundred and ninety-nine men out of a thousand would have done had they found themselves placed in similar circumstances—he lit a cigar, took off his hat and laid it on the cushion beside him, put his feet on the opposite seat, and said out aloud: “I’ll be damned if I care a button!”

But, all the same, he did care—a good many buttons—rows and rows of them. He had told himself a year or more previously, when smoking in the veranda of the bungalow at Khotah, that he had quite got over his love for Nell Vansittart—that his romance was long since dead and gone, that he could never be so utterly, entirely, hopelessly miserable again—no, not even if fifty Nell Vansittarts should say him nay!

Vain boast. At the very first moment his eyes fell upon his fair-haired stately love, with the pale face and her great dark melancholy eyes, he had felt the old passion come back upon him with tenfold strength. How he had enjoyed that homeward voyage, every day of it—how insanely happy he had been in that blissful moment when Nell, in a voice no longer whispering but rich and low and sweet, had promised to be his wife!

Well, the promise was broken now, and Nell had shown him that she cared nothing at all about him. The faithful

love of six years had been of no value to her ; she had cast his heart away with as little compunction as he himself was accustomed to cast away the end of a cigar, or to knock the ashes out of a burnt-out pipe. It was best, he argued, trying to reason himself in reconciliation with stern truth, that he should have found it out when he did. A mere chance had shown what was the real nature of the woman, whom he had loved so long and faithfully ; but for that chance the marriage would probably have taken place on the appointed day. How infinitely more terrible would his state have been, had he found out the truth after the tying of the knot which can only be respectably severed by death ! And then he recalled that it was not only as regarded his feelings that Nell Vansittart had been indifferent ; she had been utterly indifferent to the future happiness of her chosen friend, Dorothy Hawthorndean.

"Oh, she was a bad baggage !" Dickson muttered, with a wise shake of the head. It was true enough, but that was no reason why he should have supplemented his remark by an exclamation of "*The devil !*"

The remark, however, was not due to his reflections and conclusions concerning Miss Vansittart and her moral qualities, but to the entrance of a second person into the compartment.

He had hardly noticed that the train was at a standstill until the invasion of the carriage took place—an invader in the person of a young lady, who laid siege to him immediately. Young ladies, and, for the matter of that, old ladies also, invariably did—indeed, those who knew him well were accustomed to say that it was only his cleverly-managed overwhelming polite air of keep-your-distance-don't-come-too-close-to-me-stand-offishness that saved him from being eaten alive—o right out of hand whether he would or no.

On this occasion, as soon as the door was opened he announced that it was a smoking compartment, in the hope that the intruder would be scared away by the fact.

Not a bit of it! the invading host got in—a little mild-

eyed, soft-voiced creature, who said she didn't mind in the *least*, and *hoped* he would go on with his cigar—who clasped her hands together with a tragic air when he flung his weed out of the window, and declared he must absolutely *detest* her for entailing such a sacrifice upon him.

What could Dickson do but grin benignly, and assert it would be impossible for him to entertain any such feelings for her under any circumstances?

Our minor sins frequently plunge us into greater ones. The little stranger made such a fuss about the cigar that Dickson was compelled to change round-about assertions, which might mean anything or nothing, for untruths of the most flagrant description; for he found himself, before he knew what he was about, declaring that he had but thrown away the end of a cigar, whereas in truth he had thrown away one that was almost entire.

Then she asked him if he would *mind* having the window closed, and *hoped* she was not putting him to any inconvenience.

Dickson pulled up the window with a smothered curse, and forthwith the little lady began a long history by way of explanation of her request: how she was travelling *al—l* alone—how she had a mother and seven small brothers and sisters entirely dependent on her exertions, and therefore was absolutely obliged to have windows and doors closed wherever she went. Yes; she was a singer—Signorina Tankerini—yes, her maestro had advised her to take an Italian name, though of course, as he would have noticed the moment she spoke, she was an Englishwoman; her own name was Dobson—Lucy Dobson. Yes, she had been in Italy five years; she had studied with Lamperti of Milan, believed she might say she was his pet pupil. Dickson rather believed he had heard of a good many *pet pupils* of that great maestro, and wondered, with grim humour, if Signor Lamperti would know them if they were presented to him.

However, he kept his thoughts to himself, and Miss Dobson Tankerini babbled on, ignoring everyone else who got in on

the road—one of the intruders, by-the-bye, being Cogner, the lieutenant then with the *depôt* of the Cuirassiers at Canterbury, who looked at Dickson exactly as he might have looked had he known that he had been married to the little mild-eyed lady that morning, and was just setting off on his wedding tour—and directing her soft-toned conversation exclusively to Dickson all the way to London town, of course totally unaware that Dickson was provoked very nearly into dropping her out of the window, just to get rid of her.

But rid of her he was not for some time. When they reached the London terminus, she implored him to rescue her luggage and procure her a cab ; then, just as the cab was going off, would he be so very, very kind as to telegraph for her to Mrs. Dobson, 14, Rossmore Street, Dublin, to say she had reached town safely.

“And I *know* you won’t mind,” she ended. “You have been so kind, and taken *such* care of me. And if *ever* you *should* happen to hear me sing in public, be *sure* you come round and see me. I shall be *delighted* to meet you *again*. Good-bye—so many thanks.” Then the cab really did go off, leaving Dickson looking ruefully after it, and Cogner laughing at him.

“Confound La Signorina Tankerini!” he ejaculated so heartily, that Cogner laughed at his vehemence more than ever.

But at last his worries for that day were over, and he was free to go off to Long’s and enjoy himself as much as was possible under the existing rather doleful circumstances.

It is wonderful how immense a difference circumstances make in us and to us, to our thoughts, ideas, our actions. Circumstances just made all the difference in the world to Dickson’s estimation of his comrade, Cogner. During the six years in which they had been officers of the same regiment, he had taken scarcely any notice of him at all, regarding him as a headstrong racketing kind of lad, not worth the trouble of cultivating as a friend.

But now—now when he had left the regiment with which

he had spent sixteen years ; when he had not one intimate friend in the country ; when he had to go back to a regiment almost entirely strange to him ; when he had no Eliot Cardella to gabble to him while he smoked, and take him entirely out of himself ; when he had not even Laurie, with his invariable "I say, Dickson," with which to begin the multitudinous stock of questions he seemed always to have on hand ready for asking—now, when he was down on his luck, heart-sick and miserable, he found the presence of this gay hot-headed young fellow more of a comfort than he would have believed possible.

As for Cogner, he was perhaps never so surprised in his life as during the three days which followed his meeting with Dickson in the train ; and he was not a little flattered that the new-made major of the White Dragoons had shown such an evident preference for his society, that he cried out loudly against his going to an evening party, to which he had received an invitation.

"Oh, come with me ; there'll be plenty of room," he suggested, not being minded to give up his party, for he was a sociably-disposed young gentleman. "My cousin will be delighted to see you ; and I'm sure you'd like her, she's such a jolly little woman, and her husband the best fellow out."

So Dickson was beguiled into going with him to his cousin's party, where, to Cogner's immense amusement, he at once fell into the toils of a vivacious Irish lady—a very small, restless, dark-eyed coquette, with a tongue that went clitter—clatter—clack, like a steam-clapper in a hurry. She took possession of Dickson at once, and rushed head-long into a violent flirtation, of which, as regarded intention and inclination, Dickson was as innocent as the babe unborn.

Was he a lancer ? She positively worshipped lancers—oh ! a dragoon. Ah ! well, she simply adored dragoons ; there was nothing like them. Did he like being a soldier ? Wasn't he horribly afraid of getting shot one of these days ? She was always sorry when any fellows she knew got shot—it seemed such a bad use to put a man to, especially an officer.

Did he know Dublin? She came from Dublin. Where was he quartered? Oh! Carminster. Did he like Carminster? Didn't know it very well. Well, she had heard the girls there were very pretty—at least, she had a second cousin, Mr. St. Patrick Geoghagan of the 400th Foot, who was quartered at Tythebye, only five-and-twenty miles from Carminster, and he went over to a ball given there by the Greys—the Scots Greys, you know—and he said he never saw so many pretty girls in one room in his life. What did Major Dickson think? Did Major Dickson think the Carminster ladies as pretty as the Dublin ones?

Whereupon Dickson, whose head was filled with other things, and who had not followed half her gabble, replied absently:

“Certainly not—not to be compared with them.”

Oh! well, she was very glad of that, the little flirt went on; she always stood up for everything Irish herself. If he would notice she was wearing at that moment a dress of Irish poplin, trimmed with Irish lace—she always made a point of doing what she could to encourage the Irish manufacturers.

Then, after a moment's pause—to get her breath, as Dickson said savagely to himself—she started off on an entirely fresh tack.

What did he think of the campaign in South Africa? Wasn't it all too disgraceful? Wasn't the Isandula disaster too shameful?—not that it was anything compared to the state of things in the Transvaal. Had hoped the Government would go on and let them see what a regular licking meant; but neither Government nor Army seemed to her to have any spirit. As to the Afghan affair, for her part, she thought it quite too absolutely ridiculous—all those men been all that time in the country, and hadn't managed to conquer a few miserable savages. The whole thing ought to have been settled up and done with in six weeks.

But no; Dickson could stand no more of that—he sent his manners flying to the winds, and told her, without any

circumlocution, that she didn't know what she was talking about.

"How you can stand their everlasting jaw, I can't tell," he said testily to Cognér when they were on the way back to Long's. "That woman who laid hold of me was more like a jibbering ourang-outang than a human being with a reasoning soul. Lord! I never heard *even a woman* talk such drivelling rot in the whole course of my existence—the Afghan business ought to have been settled up and done with in less than six weeks! Well, by Jove! if we'd had three or four hundred women with as much tongue-power as she has, and had let 'em loose in the country, they would have driven every native between Peshawur and Caubool to commit suicide long before six weeks were over."

"You might lay your scheme before the people at the War Office," said Cognér, with a laugh.

"I have a very good mind to do it," Dickson retorted, laughing in spite of himself. "I say, Cognér, how much leave have you?"

"Ten days yet."

"I wish you would come down to Carminster for a few days—will you?"

"Oh, I should like it awfully," the younger man answered. "Do you go to-morrow?"

"Yes. It's awfully good of you to come."

Dickson breathed a sigh of relief. If the truth must be told, he had dreaded not a little the idea of going back to his new regiment alone, with this trouble hanging over his head. He had only been a week or two at Carminster, and scarcely knew the names of his brother officers. However, now that Cognér had promised to go back with him, he felt that his presence would break the ice for him not a little.

Luckily, on the following day, they managed to secure a smoking-compartment which escaped feminine invasion.

"Heaven be thanked!" ejaculated Dickson devoutly, as the train glided away from the platform; and, as at each station they departed without any of the fair sex as an



addition to their freight, he repeated the remark, with even an addition of pious fervour.

"We shall just be in comfortable time for dinner," he remarked as they got into Carminster Station. "Half-past six; if we had waited till the next train, we should not have been here till nine."

The ante-room was deserted; not even the orderly-officer for the day was to be seen.

"Who is on duty?" Dickson asked of the waiter who answered his summons.

"Mr. Lucy, sir."

"Oh! Bring some brown sherry. You prefer brown, don't you, Cognier? or will you have brandy and soda?"

"No; sherry, thanks."

"They have all gone out to tea, that is evident," Dickson remarked. "I never could see the fun of it myself."

"Like it," said Cognier, laughing. As I have said, he was a sociably-disposed young gentleman. "Always go out to tea when I have a chance."

"I'll tell Lucy. He'll trot you all round the town to-morrow. Faith, I believe he knows every woman in the place! it's like a royal progress to walk down the street with him. Oh, here he is! We were just speaking of you. I don't know if you have ever met my friend Cognier, of the Cuirassiers?"

"Er—ya—as," replied Lucy, in a soft voice of excessive affectation; "we were togeth—er at—ah—Sandhurst. Very glad to meet you again."

"Oh yes; so we were," said Cognier heartily, as he took Lucy's outstretched hand.

"And we both fell in love with the same lady," Lucy continued. "Her name was Naomi——"

"Oh yes, by Jove!" Cognier broke in.

"Then I suppose you both resigned her," said Dickson, taking his sherry as he spoke.

"Bring me a cup of tea," ordered Lucy. "Er—no. She jil—ted both of us, for a lumbering parson like an elephant,

whose name was Fligg—Solomon Fligg. I had the pleasure of meeting Mrs. Solomon—er—Fligg last month in Devonshire, the blooming mother of six or seven little Fliggs, all copies in miniature of their estimable papa ! And—er—Mrs. Fligg had the bad taste to tell me she thought she had made a very good match, when she might have had *me*."

Dickson started nervously at the words, just those that Eliot Cardella had used in speaking of Polly Antrobus. Certainly Dickson was getting horribly nervous.

"She's about right," observed Alan Trevor, who had entered in time to hear the little history. "I've no doubt the Reverend Fligg does make a more comfortable kind of husband than you would do. I rather pity any woman who marries you, Lucy."

"I don't know," Lucy returned, stirring his tea round and round with pretty much the same air of reflective wisdom that a monkey investigates a nut, or a parrot a sop. "I'm a fool, of course ; you fellows all tell me so every day, so I must be. But then, there is no doubt I'm deuced amiable ; and—oh ! by-the-bye, Major, were you going to give Cogner Josselyn's room ?"

"Yes ; I saw Josselyn in town this morning, and he told me to use it."

"Ah ! well, he'll have to have Desmond's. Josselyn's chimney has been on fire this morning—Heaven only knows why a fire was lighted on such a morning as this—and all the smoke went down Mrs. Jordon's chimney, and very nearly smothered her and the babies."

"Her and *what* ?" exclaimed Dickson incredulously.

"Oh, don't you know ?" cried Lucy, with his ridiculously soft laugh. "Haven't you heard ? No, of course—how should you have done ? Why, she's got the bounty."

"The bounty—and what the devil is the bounty ?" asked Dickson and Cogner in one breath.

"The bounty is Her Most Gracious Majesty's reward to such of her loyal subjects as increase the population by three at a time."

"But you don't mean to say that Jordon has got *three* babies!" exclaimed Dickson, positively unable to believe his ears.

"But I do—three babies. I've seen 'em," Lucy asserted triumphantly. "It was such a joke. Jordon was here, in this room, just after lunch—day before yesterday afternoon—when in came that ass Jacques, his servant.

"'Missus has gort a little dorter,' said he, looking at Jordon.

"'Ugh!' growled Jordon. 'Do they want me?'

"'Dorctor says you can storp there a bit, sir,' said Jacques, and off he went.

"'Ugh! terrible business, this,' Jordon groaned. 'What the deuce am I to do with a daughter, I should like to know! Daughters indeed, at my time of day! Ugh! it's disgraceful—simply disgraceful!'

"Well, we quieted the poor old chap down as best we could, and the Colonel ordered a liquor-up to congratulate him. Well, just as he was beginning to get jolly and chirpy, in comes Jacques again.

"'Missus has gort a little son, sir,' he announced, and shut the door.

"Jordon didn't ask that time if he was wanted, but just groaned out aloud, as if Jacques had announced the birth of a young gorilla or worse.

"'Let's have another liquor-up,' cried the chief. 'Ne-ver mind, Jordon—don't be down-hearted over it. Happy is the man, you know.'

"'Oh! I dare say, Colonel,' returned Jordon crossly. 'An empty quiver has suited us very well for ten years; and at all events we didn't want it filling at this rate.'

"Well, you'd hardly believe it, but, within half an hour, in came that ass Jacques again, a grin on his wooden face.

"'Please, sir,' said he, 'missus has gort another little dorter.'

"The Colonel, who was standing there on the rug, turned round at this.

“‘Thank you, my man,’ said he ; ‘and *you needn’t announce any more.*’”

“Ha, ha ! awfully good !” shouted Cogner, while Trevor, who had heard the story at least a dozen times before, laughed as heartily as if he was hearing it for the first time.

But Dickson, hating all the little tattling gossip with the weariness of years, did not even smile. In truth, he was wondering if he could endure to wrench himself free from the profession that he gloried in. It might not be so bad, he mused, the life of a country gentleman—though to be sure he knew nothing about it beyond shooting and hunting. Time had been, when a dream of a pleasant country-house was the brightest that he knew how to dream ; but time had changed all that, and he supposed he should have to go on soldiering to the end of the chapter.

They went presently to dress for mess, to find the stairs and corridors all laid with matting, and one or two lads coming back from their tea-parties, treading as softly as if death and not life lay behind the door over which a thick curtain was hanging—for lads in a barrack, whether they are of upper or under crust, are good in many ways ; and besides, little Mrs. Jordon was a favourite. As Dickson and Cogner went along the corridor, a door opened, and a young man appeared, carrying a basket of cut flowers.

“Well, Major,” he hailed Dickson with, yet in a voice scarcely above a whisper. “Glad you’re come back. Heard about the poor little woman in there ?” jerking his hand towards the curtained door. “Beastly shame, isn’t it ? Yes. I’ve got some flowers for her, poor little thing ! she’s awfully fond of them. And by-the-bye, Major, don’t forget *not* to shout for your servant, will you ?”

“No, I won’t,” Dickson answered, passing on.

Cogner followed him into his rooms.

“By the Lord Harry, but it’s a horrible thing to have three babies all at once !” he remarked, feelingly. “My sister has a baby that howls day and night till it’s black in the face. Fancy having three of ’em !”

"Oh! I rather fancy *all* babies don't howl," returned Dickson, with a laugh.

"And who is Mrs. Jordon? Quartermaster's wife?" Cogner asked.

"Oh no! Adjutant—gentleman, you know, but from the ranks. They've been married ten years, or thereabouts—as soon as he got his commission. He must be over forty—she full ten years younger, and the very nicest little woman going; all the fellows seem to think the world of her."

Poor Dickson! He found barrack-life more wearisome to endure than ever; the stale jokes seemed more tedious, though Cogner laughed at each one that evening as heartily as if he had never found himself at a mess-table before; Dickson wondered how he could find anything to laugh at, at all.

He himself was very weary of it all: the big jumps, the quick runs, the pretty girl at such and such a shop, the history of Mrs.—er—Solomon Fligg told over again in Lucy's absurd drawl of a voice, the fresh comments on the trio of babies upstairs, the fresher details concerning what the fellows were pleased to call Mrs. MacCarthy's goings-on—oh, he was so sick of it!

However, the days wore into weeks, and Dickson, who had congratulated himself with comfortable triumph that he could never be so utterly wretched and miserable again as he had been after Nell Vansittart refused him at York, was yet more and more miserable with each day.

He wished he had never left the Cuirassiers, that he had never left India, but was back in the bungalow at Khotah; he even wished that he was still the captain of F troop. I think any soldier who reads this will agree with me that ere a major wishes fervently he had never attained that step, the tide of his unhappiness must have reached the very full; but Dickson's disturbed mind carried him to wish more even than that, for he came at last to wish that he could die. It is not often, however, that death comes in

answer to such wishes. Death was not just then for him, rather endurance—endurance to bear and live through, for he could not get leave excepting a beggarly three days, not worth mentioning. The daily round, which we have all of us found so irksome at some time or other in our lives—the daily round, which for him consisted of petty cares and worries, such as ought not to have worried him at all : Mrs. Solomon Fligg—the trio of babies—the big jumps—the quick runs. Then the worries and troubles of his work : that fool Fisher, full private No. 625, who couldn't get through a march-out or a field-day without giving his horse a sore back—that ass Smith, full private No. 502, whose real name being L'Estrange, with a courtesy title before it, thought it beneath him to clean his traps and groom his horse properly, and couldn't be made to understand that it was no good his looking to Dickson, as an old friend and neighbour, to clear him of the consequences thereof. Dickson, who was very just, neither could nor would do it.

Then there was that scatter-brained chivalrous idiot Kennedy, full private No. 446, who having rescued a young and comely girl from the insulting attentions of his sergeant-major, and clinched the matter by marrying her, without leave be it known, could not be content to leave well alone, but must needs aggravate his superior by every means in his power, and, in the natural course of events, get the worst—very considerably the worst of it in the long-run, in the shape of sundry reports for insubordination, neglect of duty, breaking out of barracks and the like, of which injudicious crop he was wont to reap a goodly harvest of cells, shot and pack drill, confinement to barracks, and—for him most severe of all punishments—fines.

He was very sick of it all, but he plodded steadily through his round, simply because he did not dare to face a life without some occupation, which would be his lot practically if he left the service. In some—nay, many—respects it was good for him, and yet there were every day certain details to be got through which almost drove him mad.

Time had been when he had been wont to smile at the superscription of certain letters—letters calling his attention to the most private affairs of such and such of his men as happened to have slighted or offended the ladies of their acquaintance—in the old days he had never glanced at the address without a laugh :

“ *Captain Dickson, Esq.,  
F Troop,  
Cuirassiers.*”

Time had been when he had glanced adown the ill-scrawled pages of abuse with laughter-filled eyes—nowadays he turned to the end of the name, and finding none, cast the missive to the flames unread. During those dark days, many a literary bullet did indeed find a very different billet to that for which its author had intended it.

So the long summer days wore away, and soft autumn took their place. He had some leave, which he spent on Scotch moors, deer-stalking, whereupon certain joints, after enjoying five years of tropical heat, took dire offence at being treated to kilt and wet heather, and proclaimed their dissatisfaction peremptorily in a severe attack of rheumatism, which made him groan savagely to himself that he was getting old, and, in truth, helped him better over his disappointment and wretchedness about Nell Vansittart than anything else on earth could have done.

It was during that irksome illness, which lasted a fortnight or more, that Dickson, in a hesitating kind of way, came once more into possession of his senses. I say *hesitating*, because he did not realize the advantages of his position all at once, but at first only discerned a feeble glimmer of light at a long, long distance from him ; but it was a glimmer that grew and grew, until it became very respectable daylight indeed, not to be despised because it lacked the glorious sunshine of love which his brief engagement to Nell Vansittart had cast over his life.

He thought a good deal about her during that time ; he

recalled how coolly and uncompromisingly she had turned him adrift ; he recalled how utterly indifferent she had been to little Miss Hawthorndean's happiness, and once or twice could not help laughing maliciously to himself when he remembered how Lord Hope had altogether declined to avail himself of the change of programme offered to him.

"By Jove !" Dickson chuckled. "But that fellow wasn't a fool, by any means. I remember some man or other saying he was just as clever as daylight ; and, faith, he was not far wrong. After all, what chance of real happiness should I have had with such a woman as that ?"

So, by the time he was able to get about again, he was on the mend. My gentle reader, have you ever been in that position ? Do you know what it is to have been hard hit—to have had the iron go deep down into your soul—to have been wretched, heart-sick, and miserable down to the very soles of your boots, and that mysterious region which we call our hearts ? Do you know what it is to see no glory in the sunshine, no beauty in the landscape, to hear no music in the ripple of the river as it laps softly against your skiff, to hear no sweetness in the twitter of the birds or the deep-voiced baying of the hounds, scarcely indeed to find any comfort in your dinner ?

Have you been through all that ? Then surely you know also—for your own sake, I hope it is so—what it is to realize all at once that you don't feel as miserable as you did ; that your eyes are beginning to take a less jaundiced view of things in general and women in particular ; that, in short, you find you don't care a little hang for anything, and that you are getting over it ?

Blissful period !—why, one feels like a body who has got safely through suppressed measles, or something equally horrible—say vaccination that has taken badly. I could, upon my word, write a whole article on the satisfaction and delight of "getting over it," and I have no doubt I should find a good many indulgent and sympathetic readers. I would do it too, were it not that the critics hate anything



savouring of moralizing, and I am not going to bore them, if I know it.

Well, in plain words, after six months Dickson had got very comfortably over his trouble ; hunted, and dined, and danced ; went out to afternoon teas as gaily as any of the others, if not quite so frequently ; and, if he had acquired somewhat of a distaste for sentiment, and a shade more keep-your-distance in his manner to ladies, yet got a very fair amount of enjoyment out of such society as Carminster had to offer.

## CHAPTER II.

DICKSON'S long leave began just after Christmas, and it must be owned that he departed from Carminster Barracks in a very different frame of mind to that in which he had set off for Scotland three months previously.

I would impress upon my reader that Dickson was emphatically not a changeable man. In learning that he had, so to speak, broken the neck of his trouble in half a year, it must not be thought he was in any degree fickle. In truth, a more absolutely faithful nature than his did not exist ; but it was not any shade of infidelity that made him feel pretty much as he had felt during the time he had been in India.

And yet, though he was not more unhappy, or, as I had better express it, not less happy than he had been, there was decidedly a difference in the state of his feelings. During those years, Miss Vansittart had reigned in his heart a very goddess—unattainable for him, it is true, yet a goddess still. Now his goddess had fallen, as ages and ages ago fell the god of the Philistines. Like Dagon, his goddess was broken, and practically—like Dagon also—she would not bear mending. The difference he felt, put plainly in the vulgar tongue, meant, that Miss Vansittart was not worth breaking his heart about ; and in coming to that conclusion, between you and me, he was not very far wrong.

It happened that when, late in the afternoon, he was

entering his club—the Junior Army and Navy, if you wish to know the exact one—he ran against a man who was coming out of it.

“I really beg your pardon,” he said hastily.

“Don’t mention it,” said the other; then added in a tone of recognition: “Oh, how d’you do? I don’t know if you remember me—my name is Hope.”

Remember him! Dickson would have recognised him if they had met at the Antipodes, and a thousand years had passed instead of six months.

“And how are you?” Lord Hope went on civilly, perceiving that the encounter was evidently not particularly painful to Dickson.

“Oh, very well, thanks. I’ve just had a nasty attack of rheumatism—sort of thing to make me feel I’m getting old.”

“Beastly thing, rheumatism,” Lord Hope rejoined; “and I should think Indian warmth will have made you liable to it. I suppose you are on your long leave?”

“Yes. I came up from Carminster this morning,” Dickson answered.

“And what are you going to do? Are you engaged for the whole time? If not, you wouldn’t like to come to us, would you? At least—that is—I mean—oh, confound it all! if you don’t bear me a grudge for that wretched affair last summer, will you come and see us at Hope Rest? We shall be delighted if you will; in fact, Lady Hope has never ceased worrying about you.”

“Lady Hope is awfully kind,” Dickson replied. “I don’t think I need be worried about—unless I happen to get rheumatism, when sympathy is valuable.”

Lord Hope laughed.

“I’m glad you see things in the same light as I do. Depend upon it, what is, is best. I always tell my wife so.”

“I think so, too,” Dickson rejoined.

“I’m very glad to hear it. Well, you know, or perhaps you don’t know, that I have left the service. Yes; I didn’t quite see dragging my wife about at the tail of a regiment,

and she didn't care about it either. So I sold out, and we are living now at Hope Rest in Devon ; we prefer it to the north. Then, Dickson, will you come to us ?"

"I shall be delighted," Dickson replied.

"And when—what engagements have you ?" the other asked.

"None at all," said Dickson, with a laugh at his forlorn condition. "You see I was a good while in India, and I haven't gone about much since I came home."

"Then go down with me to-morrow," Hope broke in ; "let us consider it settled. Where are you staying ? Oh, Long's ! Well, I have to see my lawyer at ten to-morrow morning, and go down somewhere about noon ; so I'll send my servant round by ten o'clock to let you know the train."

"Very well," Dickson agreed.

Then they parted. Dickson passed into the club, where he picked up a friend, with whom he dined ; and later went to a theatre, so getting through the evening very comfortably.

"I have got over it, thank heaven !" he said triumphantly to himself over his last pipe. "If I hadn't, the sight of that fellow would have fetched me, no mistake about it ; as it was, I was very glad to meet with him. How different he looks—not like the same man, upon my word ! I never saw a more hang-dog looking chap than he was that day we went to the White Dragoon sports ; but he looks jolly enough now, and I don't wonder at it, when his wife's such an out-and-out thoroughbred as she is."

Thus the Dickson who, on the following day, went down into the west with Lord Hope, was, if not quite the ultra-contented Dickson who had paid that really tragic visit at Hawthorndean, a very different man indeed from the unhappy Dickson who had mooned about Carminster, disappointed and down on his luck, wishing himself dead, or even that he had never been born. In short, except that he was a trifle more chary of the fair sex, and on occasion a trifle more caustic in his comments when stories of in-

compatibility of temper and matrimonial *vol-au-vents* that had turned out regular hashes were aired at the mess-table, he was just the same Dickson who had been the ruling spirit of the bungalow at Khotah.

"By-the-bye, Dickson," Lord Hope remarked, as they were spinning along between the avenue of big elms which form the approach to the mansion of Hope Rest, "do you know that we are quite alone, except for one of my sisters-in-law? We have a houseful coming next week, though."

Before Dickson could make the polite reply which of course any man would have made, his host pulled up the horses with a jerk, and instantly the door was flung open, and Lady Hope appeared bareheaded at the top of the steps.

"I saw the lamps coming up the avenue," she called out gaily. "Why, Cecil, have you brought some one with you? Is it Tom?" shading her eyes with her hand, and peering into the darkness.

"No, Lady Hope, it is not," Dickson answered.

Lady Hope began cautiously to descend the steps.

"I can't see you a bit—but I know the voice, though I don't know what name to put to it," she cried, laughing. Then as the light fell upon his face, when he jumped on to the steps, she exclaimed, "Oh! yes, yes—it is you. Oh, I *am* glad! To think of your *really* coming to Hope Rest! You are most welcome!" taking his hand as he reached her side. "How *lovely* of you to come! and we shall have you *all* to ourselves, for there is not a soul in the house but Cecil and myself, except my sister Gwen. You remember Gwen, of course?"

All this fuss and greeting was very sweet and comfortable to Dickson. Poor fellow, he had acquired a certain bitterness of thought and tone where women were concerned; he made very few exceptions, calling and thinking them all bad in a lump. In the privacy of his own rooms he dubbed them tiger-cats, and when now and then he held intercourse with them, it was in such a polished glacial kind of way,

that the most inveterate flirt in the world could not have flattered herself on having made the least little bit of an impression on him ; yet, at that moment, when his dainty little hostess led him into the house, telling him, in her odd, breathless, italicized fashion, how more than welcome he was, he actually found himself wishing that Hope had taken the chance Miss Vansittart had offered him, and had left Dorothy Hawthorndean free to be wooed and won by somebody else—meaning, of course, Dickson, Major of the White Dragoons.

“Cecil,” said Lady Hope, going into her husband’s dressing-room an hour afterwards. “Do you think he minds much?”

“Not a button,” Hope answered, slipping a stud into his shirt-front.

“Well, *I* thought so too—only, do you think he is likely to make it up with her again?”

Lord Hope turned and stared at his wife in blank amazement.

“Why, Dolly,” he exclaimed, “he’d never be such an ass as to give her the chance. By Jove, if you’d only heard the cool way in which she turned him off ; it made me sick to hear it, for it was just about the most cold-blooded thing you could imagine. Not a word of regret that she had taken him, knowing perfectly well she did not care a toss for him ; not a word of his disappointment or yours, but just a dogged reiteration of how he would be sure to meet somebody else some day, whom he would love better than he had ever loved her.”

“So she told me,” said Lady Hope, thinking how quietly and uncompromisingly Nell had accepted her sacrifice, and how gloriously happy she had looked when she appeared in the drawing-room that evening, knowing full well she was about to deal the man who had loved her so long and faithfully the most bitter blow woman can deal to man. “Well, I hope he *will* soon find some one a *great* deal better worth loving than Nell Vansittart,” she ended.

"The quest won't be a particularly difficult one," returned Lord Hope, with a short laugh.

"What a good thing it would be if he would fall in love with Gwen," Lady Hope remarked presently.

"Now look here, Dolly," said Hope, putting his arm round her waist. "Don't you go matchmaking. There's no more dangerous game in existence, you take my word for it. In nine cases out of ten, instead of helping matters on, meddling only puts them off. If the match turns out well, you get no thanks nor credit for it; and if it turns out badly, you get the blame all round. Just let the thing take its own course. If Dickson is to fall in love with Gwen, depend upon it he will do it. But don't you go meddling, or you'll spoil the whole thing: let Gwen's pretty face do its own work."

Very good counsel, and Lady Hope, being an obedient as well as an affectionate wife, followed it scrupulously; but, unfortunately, Gwen's pretty face did not work the desired spell with the desired speed upon the visitor at Hope Rest, that Lady Hope wished.

He seemed very happy and contented there, but he talked almost exclusively to Lady Hope, and if he looked a good deal at her sister, he seemed quite satisfied to do no more. His little hostess, who, so to speak, had knocked Hope into a cocked hat in less than a fortnight, could simply have shaken him. A whole month went by, and he was still at Hope Rest, though visitors had come and visitors had gone—lots of them. True, once or twice he had proposed feebly that his visit should come to an end, but Hope had pooh-poohed the idea of his leaving them; so there he was still, more than content to talk to Lady Hope, and to look at her sister.

Lady Hope was almost beside herself. She took occasion one morning to tell him he ought to be married; he would be far happier; it would be just the very best thing in the world for him.

Dickson agreed with her perfectly, but told her he was especially unfortunate; he had been jilted once, and the only

other lady—— And there he broke off, leaving her to finish the sentence as best she liked.

Then she tried Gwen. She sounded Gwen one very wet morning, when they were sitting together alone in the morning-room.

"Gwen," she began cautiously, "I think Major Dickson likes Hope Rest."

"I think he does," Gwen returned.

"He is very good-looking" ~~as~~ if she had only just discovered that fact.

"I should think he is."

Evidently Gwen had found that out long before.

"And so nice—so—so pleasant and unaffected," Lady Hope continued.

"Yes," said Gwen, smothering back a sigh.

"I fancy he has quite got over the affair with Nell Vansittart."

An indignant scarlet flush flamed out on Gwen's cheeks instantly.

"Oh, I should think so—nasty wretch!"

"Why?" inquired her sister mildly.

"Why? Nasty, sneaking, double-dealing thing! It's my opinion, Dolly, that faint in Cecil's rooms was nothing but a sham. I cannot imagine what either of them saw in her, and it's my opinion that they are both very well rid of her."

"Yes, if he had found some one else."

"Ah! yes, you are right, Dolly. Now he, of course, judges all women by that one, instead of believing what is true—that not one woman in ten thousand would have treated him as scandalously as that one did."

"You would not, Gwen?"

"I? I should think not," moving restlessly about the room, and speaking in reckless, almost defiant tones. "I only wish he would give *me* the chance of treating him differently—of making up to him for the scandalous way Nell Vansittart behaved to him. But he will not. He takes

good care to keep out of my way as much as possible—naturally enough, too.”

“I don’t see why. I think, Gwen, if you were a little kinder in your manner to him——”

“Oh, nonsense! he would distrust me all the more,” Gwen asserted. “I should myself.”

Lady Hope was in despair; nothing seemed any use. Gwen would not lift her finger; and Dickson, poor fellow, evidently had no such thought in his mind. How she should contrive to bring the pair together she simply did not know. She wanted to help them, and they would not be helped.

“I will give it up,” she said vexedly, to herself. “I believe, after all, he *is* hankering after her yet. Supposing he goes back to her, she would take him quickly enough, but I should never get over it; and after the chance Gwen has had, too.”

She sat thinking it over long after her sister had left the room, wondering for the most part why Major Dickson seemed to find such pleasure in watching Miss Hawthorndean. He never appeared anxious to talk to her, or walk or ride with her; but did she move from one part of the room to another, his cool blue eyes would follow her so approvingly, that his little hostess could not imagine why matters progressed no further.

If she had asked Dickson outright why he looked so often at her sister, he would have answered promptly, because she was so pleasant to look at. That was true. Gwen Hawthorndean was a larger, brighter, more graceful edition of Dorothy herself—a good girl, good every way—good to look at, to hear, to know—much too good to make even the moderate amount of eyes at him that Lady Hope would have had her do; in short, she was what Dickson had called her sister, “An out-and-out thoroughbred.”

The idea of falling in love with her had really not occurred to him. The let-down from which he had but just recovered had left him with a decided dread of feminine fascinations and a wholesome horror of sentiment. Then all at once an



idea flashed over his mind, that even if dead roses do not bloom again, they yet are followed by other blooms just as beautiful and quite as bright ; it occurred to him that it was very senseless to eschew cakes and ale because he had once eaten cake that was indigestible and had drunk ale that was foisty.

Not that he came to this wise conclusion by himself ; it so happened that when Lady Hope was engaged in sounding Gwen, Major Dickson was passing through the hall, and as the door of the morning-room happened to be open, he heard Miss Hawthorndean's clear voice make a statement—a statement which somehow seemed to stupefy him for a moment, and then set all his pulses beating and throbbing like a lunatic steam-engine trying its best to jump out of itself.

“I only wish he would give *me* the chance of treating him differently—of making up to him for the scandalous way Nell Vansittart behaved to him,” rang out the indignant tones. Then with a sudden change to sadness, “But he will not.”

All electrified as he was, Dickson was yet the very soul of honour ; he stayed to hear no more, but bolted into the deserted smoking-room and shut the door behind him. Then he lit up his pet meersehaum and sat down to think it over.

What a difference those few daring outspoken words had made in him, all at once ! the burden seemed to have slipped off his shoulders—the burden of loneliness and cynicism which no one but himself knew how very hard he had found to bear. The pleasant dream of a pleasant country-house came back to him with a reality and a sweetness new to him, for its chatelaine to be was something more than beautiful—she was true and frank and brave, and best of all, he knew from the tone of her voice that she loved him.

Just as the pipe came to an end, the gong sounded for luncheon, so he heaved himself out of his chair, straightened

his back, put the meerschaum away in its case, pulled up his collar and pulled down his jacket, and gave a glance at himself in the glass above the fireplace, to see if his hair was all right.

"I'll tell you what it is, Dickson, my friend," he remarked solemnly: "you're six-and-thirty years old, and the sooner you get yourself settled in life, the better for you; you've no time to waste. Cut the service and put the question to her plump this very afternoon, and get the whole business out of hand at once."

He had never been given to shilly-shallying; it was not in the man's nature. Having made up his mind, he did not dawdle in carrying his resolution into effect. As I said, he straightened himself up and turned away from the glass, with the old swaggering gesture of his right arm which Eliot Cardella had mimicked so gaily many and many a time, pulling the arm well out of its sleeve, and passing the edge of the hand across his moustache; then he made his way into the dining-room, looking so spruce and smart, with such a comfortable smile on his bronzed good-looking face, such a light shining in his blue eyes, that Lady Hope stared at him in blank amazement.

But Dickson did not, as was usual with him at that meal, make for the seat on his hostess's right hand; he took possession of one beside Miss Hawthorndean, quick to notice, as Lady Hope was, that Gwen turned scarlet from chin to brow.

"Miss Hawthorndean," he said presently, "have you made any engagement for this afternoon?"

"No, I have not. I believe Dolly and Cecil are going to call on the Bryants," she answered; "but I am not going."

"I wish you would try the Conqueror," naming one of the horses—a valuable hunter—that he had taken to Hope Rest with him.

"Oh, I shall be delighted!" she returned eagerly; for she was a splendid horse-woman, and had been casting

longing eyes on the animal in question ever since he had been in Hope Rest stables.

"Then I may order the horses? Shall we say half-past two?" said Dickson, as composedly as if they had ridden together every day. "Yes? I hope he will carry you well; he has carried a lady regularly."

"Oh, he could not carry me anything but well," Gwen cried, very much in her sister's enthusiastic way. "He *is* such a beauty! To tell you the truth, I've been dying to ride him ever since he came."

"Then why in the world didn't you say so?" Dickson asked blankly.

"Oh, well, I hadn't quite cheek enough," she said, with a laugh; then added in disappointed tones, "Oh, it is raining! just pouring."

"It may clear up! If not, shall we decide to go to-morrow?"

"Yes, but I don't mind a little rain, if you don't," she answered.

"It will not clear up this afternoon," he said, half an hour later, when they had gone to the door to look at the sky; we must put it off until to-morrow."

"Yes," she admitted regretfully.

"Let us go round to the stables and have a look at the horses," he suggested.

"Very well," growing cheerful again, for going to look at the horses was next best to going for a ride. "Here, help me into my ulster, Major Dickson," reaching it from a peg whereon it generally hung. "Now I'm ready."

Just what Dickson wanted; the opportunity was even better than he had planned, for they found the stables deserted, except for the gees themselves. Certainly he made the most of his time; his worst enemy could not have said that he did not take that particular tide at the flood, for as soon as they got into the Conqueror's stable he turned round to his companion.

"Miss Hawthorndean," he said coolly, yet with a very

gentle tone, "if the Conqueror carries you well to-morrow will you accept him?"

"Will I do what?" she asked in utter astonishment.

Dickson smiled. "I will put it plainer," he said, taking her hand in his. "Will you accept the Conqueror as your horse, and **his** master as your husband?"

The girl's dark eyes opened wide with amazement.

"Do you mean it?" she said, after a while.

"I rather think so," he answered, laughing, and taking possession of the waist as well as the hand.

"I—I—thought——" she began.

"Yes, I know; that I was quite broken-hearted. So did I. But we all make mistakes at times, don't we? The greatest mistake I ever made in my life was when I fell in love with Nell Vansittart; but it is a mistake for which I shall thank God every hour of my life."

"Why?" the girl asked.

"Because otherwise I might never have known you," he answered.

"And you really care for me?"

"Oh, my darling!" Dickson answered; "I have been miserably mistaken, utterly unhappy. I have wasted six of the best years of my life in worshipping an idol of clay. I have grudged them bitterly, but I do not grudge them now in the least, because they have kept me free to love you."

"You see I was right after all," Lord Hope remarked triumphantly, when his wife flew to him with the news. "I knew it would all come right, if it was to be, without any meddling on our parts. I'm very glad, Dolly; very, very glad. Dickson's a lucky chap if Gwen makes half as good a wife as you make me."

"And Gwen luckier still if he makes half as good a husband as I have," she rejoined.

Lord Hope was right—she was a good wife. Dickson had privately thanked her for that fragment of a sentence

he had overheard, knowing she had done her best to give him his happiness. She was a generous little woman, for she never mentioned the fact to her husband ; nor has she, to this day, breathed a word of it, lest she should seem to be crowing over him ; as Dickson said, "The Hawthorn-deans ~~were~~ ut-and-out thoroughbreds."

## *OPEN TO THE GARRISON.*

SCOTT LAURIE had left the Cuirassiers, having effected an exchange with Kerr, of the Scarlet Lancers.

He had taken the step for several reasons : first, because he found the climate of India did not agree with him after that terrible attack of typhoid which had almost cost him his life, and the subsequent relapse which had followed the discovery that Eliot Cardella was also laid upon a bed of sickness ; secondly, because, thanks to poor Eliot's legacy, he could now afford to be in a regiment serving at home ; and thirdly, because his elder brother Willy had fallen with his gallant comrades of the 24th at Isandula, and Scott being now the eldest, his father wished him to be within reach. Besides these considerations, he had lost the two friends of his heart, Cardella and Dickson—the latter, it will be remembered, had left the Cuirassiers on promotion to the majority of the White Dragoons, and had afterwards married Lady Hope's sister, Gwendoline Hawthorndean—after which Laurie found the old regiment scarcely worth living in ; and, moreover, he had been seized with an unconquerable detestation of everything and everybody that grew and lived and had its being under the light of Indian skies.

Eliot Cardella's legacy had made life very much smoother for him. At first he had felt and said that it would be absolutely impossible for him to take advantage of the mistake for which Eliot had laid down his life, and he had,

as soon as he had heard of Lord Cardella's marriage, written to Lord Mallinbro' to that effect.

Lord Mallinbro', however, promptly replied that they all wished the dead man's will to be carried out in its integrity. Lady Mallinbro' wrote also.

"I beg you to have no compunction," she said, "in accepting Eliot's property. We can never forget that you were his dear friend, and if only he had been selfish enough to have followed Captain Dickson's and your wishes at the beginning of your illness, we should not now be mourning the loss of the dearest son who ever lived. When you return to England, I beg you will, as soon as possible, come and see me, that I may express to you how completely I hold you free from blame concerning the miserable mistake which cost us our dear Eliot's life."

So Scott Laurie came into possession of some five hundred a year over and above his own property, and felt he need not remain in India a day longer. As I said, the Cuirassiers had changed very much—the regiment was positively not the same that he had joined, and he therefore turned his back upon it without any very great degree of regret. Indeed, as soon as he got fairly settled in the Scarlet Lancers, he was glad, very glad, that he had made the exchange; he liked regimental life in England—he had not liked it at all in India since he lost his two great friends. Moreover, as soon as he joined his new regiment, he struck up a great friendship with one Algy Ferrers, otherwise known as Bootles, who suited him in all respects, as he himself put it, down to the very ground.

To Laurie, an intimate friend was neither more nor less than an absolute necessity—he just used to jaw to Dickson like a babbling brooklet, and so now he jawed to Bootles. Bootles liked him, as everyone did; for if not very wise nor yet very learned, there was something pleasant and manly and straightforward about him. He was good to look at, cheerful almost at all times, of a light-hearted, genial disposition, and as entirely true as a fine Toledo

blade, which you may bend point to hilt without any fear of breaking.

It happened one afternoon that Laurie, sitting alone in the ante-room, was dawdling over the newspapers, when Bootles entered, followed by the senior captain, Allardyce.

"Oh! here you are, you fellows," Laurie said in the cool, fresh, pleasant voice which was one of his greatest charms. "Well, Allardyce, what's the latest?"

"Well, now look here," returned Allardyce seriously. "I want you to do something for me."

"Really—what is it?"

Bootles stirred up the fire with a grim laugh, and Allardyce did unfold his tale.

"We're giving a great meeting to-night—a discussion on the merits of drink or no drink, and open to the entire garrison."

"Oh! Drink or no drink," repeated Laurie politely, at which Bootles began to laugh again.

"The fact is, the moderate drinkers," Allardyce went on solemnly, "are worse to get hold of than the regular sots. There's some hope of a sot, but a moderate drinker is like the fool in the Proverbs, he's vain in his own conceit."

"Wise in his own conceit, Ally," struck in Bootles.

"It amounts to the same thing. We think if we get the moderate drinkers *once*, we may get them again, and so make an impression on them—we find such difficulty in getting hold of them at all. Now what I want you fellows to do, is to come and talk to 'em a bit. You know, Laurie, you've got such a ready tongue, you always make the men laugh when there's any speechifying on hand; and I want you to come and make 'em laugh to-night."

"The devil you do!" Laurie exclaimed. "Bless my soul, I didn't know you went in for amusement at your teetotal fights."

"A means to an end—a great and ennobling end," said Allardyce. "Why shouldn't they be amusing? What did you think we do?"



"Oh," Laurie answered patly, "I thought you all sat on your thumbs, like the old lady at Lackington School-feast."

"You've got hold of the wrong tale, Scott," interposed Bootles gravely. "She never thought of any such wise expedient. Said the parson to her, seeing her looking about vainly for a safe anchorage, 'Oh dear, dear, Mrs. Gadabout, I'm afraid you've nothing to sit upon.' 'Why, yes, sir,' said she, 'I've plenty to sit upon, but I've nowhere to put it.'"

"I might use that story up!" cried Laurie, with a laugh. "Eh, Allardyce?"

"Um—ph!" returned the teetotal Captain doubtfully. "You see, it has nothing to do with the subject in hand. Now, if you will come and talk to them about temperance, why——"

"But I ain't a total abstainer," remonstrated Laurie; whercat Bootles picked up a newspaper and laughed immoderately behind its friendly shelter.

"But there's no reason why you shouldn't become one," retorted the other eagerly.

"Ah, take it at the flood," interposed the cool voice from behind the newspaper.

"Hey?" said Allardyce sharply (he was not given to the study of Shakespeare). "Well, but Laurie, you know, it would be the very best thing in the world for you; you wouldn't be the same fellow—you wouldn't indeed. I believe drink to be the curse of this great country. Now look at me, for instance. Two years ago I was a moderate drinker——"

"Oh, a *moderate* drinker," Laurie echoed, copying his tone—"were you, now?" at which the newspaper on the other side of the hearth began to shake again.

"Yes, sir, I was. And the result? Always had a headache; never wanted to get up in the morning; couldn't eat any breakfast; had a bad taste in my mouth; got inflammation of the coating of my stomach——"

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"The devil you did!" Laurie ejaculated blankly. "And all that from *moderate* drinking? Why, what the deuce do hard drinkers come to?"

"To the devil himself," said the teetotal Captain impressively. "To the very devil himself, my friend."

"What's he like, Allardyce?" came from behind the newspaper.

"Hey?" said Allardyce, puzzled again.

"What's he like? To look at, you know?"

"How on earth should I know?" testily. "Well, then, Laurie, you'll come down to St. George's Hall to-night and say a few words to them, won't you?"

"I'll go too, if you do, Scott," said Bootles.

Captain Allardyce brightened up considerably. To secure two such distinguished converts in one day was a treat which did not often fall to his share.

"Now, that's real good of you, Bootles," he said heartily. "Come and hear us—that's all we ask. Give us a fair hearing, and if we can convince you and get you to join us, why, only think of the splendid examples you will be to the men—you two fellows are so awfully popular—and besides, just think how much better it will be for you both, in every way—no more headaches—no——"

"I thought *you* were in bed with a headache all yesterday," interrupted Bootles ruthlessly.

"That was a *sick* headache—I'm subject to them," returned Allardyce promptly, and with a certain air of dignity which sent Bootles off into roars of laughter.

"Oh, you be shot, Allardyce!" in indignant remonstrance from Laurie. "I thought I was going to get rid of my sick headaches. Heaven knows, I'd turn total abstainer, or total anything else, to secure that."

"I dare say you would find total abstinence go a long way towards getting rid of them," replied Allardyce soothingly. "Well, I'm off to the Colonel's quarters; he half promised to look in to-night, and I want to make sure of him. Then let us leave it this way, Laurie: you'll come

and hear what we've got to say—hear all the witnesses for and against, and if you feel like speaking, you'll do so, eh?"

"All right," Laurie returned good-naturedly; then added, as the senior Captain closed the door behind him: "What an ass he is!"

"Makes a deuced bad pleader," Bootles returned; "not but what teetotalism is a good thing for him. Moderate drinker indeed! By George! he used to drink like a fish, or the great sea-serpent that hadn't had anything to drink for a month. He's given up spirituous liquors of a certainty, but how much better it can be for a man to drink fifty cups of strong tea or homœopathic cocoa in a day, passes my comprehension. The fact of the matter is, he don't drink a drop less, only he has diminished the quality."

"Will he get the Colonel to go?"

"He may, if only for the fun of it. For my part, I call it deuced selfish to try and dock the men of their liquor; not one of them has the means of drinking as he used to do."

"No, poor devils!" pityingly.

It was just seven o'clock that evening when Bootles and Laurie got out of a cab and entered St. George's Hall, where "the great military drink or no drink discussion, open to the garrison," was to take place. Captain Allardyce welcomed them vociferously.

"Glad to see you, my dear chaps," he gushed out, his nose through excitement being redder than usual, and doing quite a pleasant little rivalry to the vivid scarlet of his mess-jacket. "Come up on the platform."

"Oh, I'm not going up there," answered Laurie, drawing back.

"Nonsense. I've got the Colonel to keep you in countenance, and half a dozen other fellows."

"But I'm *not* a total abstainer," Laurie remonstrated vigorously. "Confound it all, Allardyce, you know very well I am not an abstainer of any kind."

"We want witnesses on both sides of the question," was

the solemn reply. "We show that way how fair and above-board we are."

So Laurie, followed by Bootles, was marched up the great hall, on that occasion filled to overflowing by a fair sprinkling of ladies and a regular crush of uniforms of every rank and regiment in the garrison. As soon as the men of D and H Troops caught sight of their respective captains, a ringing shout went up, quickly joined in by the whole assembly. Bootles remained as cool and collected as usual—in truth, thoroughly enjoying the situation; but Laurie, blushing up to the very roots of his hair, and with a general air of shamefacedness, looked just as he felt—as if he would have given a hundred pounds to find himself anywhere but in the midst of that crowded assembly, gathered together to discuss the great drink or no drink question in St. George's Hall. However, when he found himself brought to an anchor in the very next chair to the Colonel, with whom he was an immense favourite, he cooled down a little, and the careless flippancy of manner natural to him returned, and he remarked:

"I say, Colonel, you haven't turned teetotal, have you?"

"No, I haven't," the chief replied, with a laugh; "but you have. At least, so Allardyce has been telling us; he says he never met with two more promising cases in his life than you and Ferrers."

"Did he say that?"

"Really."

"What, out aloud?"

"Out aloud? Rather—at the top of his voice, off this very platform."

At this point Bootles laughed—he always did laugh at a critical moment—a little short "Ha, ha!" which somehow invariably had the effect of sending everyone in his immediate neighbourhood into fits, while he himself remained as grave as any judge is popularly supposed to be. For once, however, the irresistible "Ha, ha!" proved a failure, for Laurie, looking as black as a thunder-cloud, doubled up his

fist and made a remark *sotto voce* at Allardyce's scarlet-clad back, which made the chief laugh as if he was going to choke.

"You brute!" Laurie muttered vindictively; "but, by George, I'll pay you out for this by-and-by, see if I don't."

Allardyce was the first to speak—he was in the chair, in fact, and opened the proceedings. He carefully explained that the speakers on the great drink or no drink questions were expected, and indeed begged, to speak from the heart.

"Or the coating of the stomach," murmured Bootles, from his place just behind the Colonel and Laurie.

"It was no use coming there unless they did so speak. He would give them his experience—he believed in no drink. He believed if there was no drink there would be no wickedness in the world. He believed people would live twice as long as they did; he believed people would be twice as rich; he believed people would be a million times as happy. He knew *he* had been a hundred million times happier since he gave up drink entirely and became a total abstainer. But," he ended, "they had most of them heard him many times—he was not a good speaker——"

"That you certainly are not," remarked Bootles in the background.

"He had not the gift of a ready tongue, he knew it. He would therefore sit down; but before doing so, he would call upon his friend Mr. Joppling to say a few words."

Mr. Joppling was a Quartermaster, a thick-set, beetle-browed personage, who spoke slowly, and seemed to be struggling with gum jujubes all the time. He began:

"Captain Allardyce—ladies--and—gentlemen——" long pause. "I'm a total abstainer. I've been a total abstainer for eight years——" here a slight difficulty arose with the gum jujube, at which Bootles remarked that he had never before given Joppling credit for arts and sciences in the dentistry line. "There are many people in this country who are not called drinkers. I say they ARE drinkers," thumping his hand on the railing of the platform

with a force that threatened to bring the whole concern down bodily. "I repeat it—they ARE drinkers. A man cannot be more than sober. If he ain't got any drink in him, he's sober. You'll all agree as to that. Well, if a man has drink in him, he cannot be sober; and if he is not sober, he must be drunk. My friends, have you ever *considered* that if you drink a single glass of beer or toddy, you must be drunk? But it is so. There are no degrees of sobriety; then there ought to be no degrees of drunkenness; a man is either drunk or sober—he can't be a *little* sober, then neither can he be a little drunk. It is true that we often hear a man called 'a bit fresh'—or that he was 'in liquor, but certainly not drunk.' My friends, if we were quite honest, we should say he was quite intoxicated.

"But that, my friends, is only one side of the question. Drunkenness is not only bad and wicked and injurious, it's extravagant and wasteful. Let me give you a few statistics on the subject."

"By George, if they drop out!" muttered Bootles, who had a good side view of the speaker, and had been watching him anxiously from the moment he had risen to his feet.

Laurie grinned at the idea of it, and somehow the grin spread amongst the men of his own troop down below, and there was a general jogging of elbows and passing of remarks—"as 'ow there'll be something worth hearing when the Capt'n comes to the front."

Mr. Joppling continued, referring to a paper every now and then.

"Er—— this town is situated a hundred and fifty miles from the metropolis; the rail passes through seventeen towns of over thirty thousand inhabitants, twenty-five of over fifteen thousand, thirty-two of over five thousand, and thirty-six villages in the aggregate comprising upwards of one hundred and thirty thousand souls."

"That's a lie," muttered Bootles calmly; while the grin on Laurie's face spread thereon, and, like the little leaven

which leaveneth the whole lump, increased the grin in the audience to audible sniggering.

"If all the public-houses, dram-shops, spirit-vaults, gin-palaces, bars and inns to be found in those forty-seven towns and thirty-six villages, containing in all one million one hundred and fifty-five thousand souls, were placed in a straight row from London to Chertsey, they would line both sides of the railway without intermission. What do you think of that, my friends? I will give you a more striking proof still of the wastefulness of drink. If all the money that is spent in England alone during one year, not comprising Scotland and Ireland or the Colonies, were given to pay the National Debt, in two years *we shouldn't have a National Debt at all.*"

Immense clapping from the total abstainers greeted this, under cover of which Bootles remarked that if all the lies Joppling had ever told could be laid in one straight line—"and we shouldn't have to stretch it tight by any means"—they would reach from St. George's Hall, Chertsey, right to a certain warm, not to say sultry clime, which it wouldn't be polite to mention.

"I ask you to look at facts, nothing but facts," the Quartermaster went on, forgetting his hesitation. "In setting these statistics before you, we build your convictions on a rock. Can any of you in this hall to-night, who pride yourselves on being moderate drinkers, lay before us any such facts as these? No—I say, no—most emphatically, *NO.*"

After this oration, he sat down, flushed and triumphant.

"Splendid speech," whispered Allardyce; "it has taken tremendously."

"I should like to say a few words, sir," said a sergeant, who had been standing below the platform, "if quite convenient."

"Of course—of course! Come up—come up!" Allardyce exclaimed excitedly. "Come up at once; why have you not been sitting here all along? Come up and speak out;

don't be afraid to say just what you think—just what comes from your heart. Ladies and gentlemen, Sergeant-Major Carnaby is going to say a few words to us.”

Sergeant-Major Carnaby stepped forward, a fine, well-set-up Lancer, with smooth brown hair, and a pleasant, sensible, shrewd face.

“Captain Allardyce,” said he, “Colonel Wilson, ladies and gentlemen,—This is a meeting for the discussion of drink or no drink. The chairman has invited anyone on either side to step up and bear witness, either for or against. I'm not going to make a speech—I can't do it—it ain't in my line; I leave that to my betters. But I want to tell you a few *facts*. The last speaker asked you to believe facts, to build your convictions on a rock; and a very good thing too, if you only knew how to do it.” (Laughter.) “Well, ladies and gentlemen, I ask you to do the same thing—to listen to facts. They ain't facts about numbers, which I'm sure there's very few here could add up without a paper and pencil.” (“Hear, hear,” from Laurie.) “They're facts I think the very youngest here'll be able to understand; and as for them that are about myself, why, my Colonel's set here behind me and the Capt'n of my troop—if I'm wrong in what I say, I hope they'll be kind enough to correct me,” with a bow to the chief and Bootles who both bowed gravely back again.

“Well, the first fact I have to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, is, I'm 'ight-and-twenty years of age. I've been 'ight years in the Scarlet Lancers, and I'm Sergeant-Major of D Troop. That you all know, who know me at all. *I say I'm one of the best soldiers in the regiment.*” (“Hear, hear,” from Bootles.) “I've never been in trouble of any kind but once since I joined the regiment, and that was for giving a chap a good hiding for kicking a woman. I'd do it again to-morrow. You ask my Colonel—he's set here to my left, and has promised to speak up for me, if need be—and he'll give me a good character. I'm the best hand at tent-pegging in the regiment, and the best shot, except the



Colonel himself; and I'm like him—*I'm not a total abstainer.*"

"Hurr—ay!" from the "drink" side of the house.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I've got the Victoria Cross on my breast, and I'm prouder of it than of anything I possess, but I didn't win it on total abstinence; I won it on a drink of brandy. My Colonel 'll bear me witness, and I'll tell you how it was. The Colonel and me, and a private called John Morris—he's over there by the door—were outside Bloemschesgracht Camp one morning, perhaps half a mile away. Well, we were surprised by half a dozen Boers, who fired upon us, shooting my horse dead as a door-nail, and not only putting an end to the Colonel's horse, but breaking his ankle-bone. Did any of you ever break your ankle-bones, ladies and gentlemen? Them that have 'll know without my telling 'em what it's like; and them that haven't 'll perhaps be content to take Colonel Wilson's word for it, that it's as bad a thing almost as can happen to you. You'll all be able to understand that, with his leg disabled in that way, he could not walk a yard. Well, we were just going to get him on to Private John Morris's charger, when down it came to the ground with a smash; it was done for, poor beast! Well, what was to be done? Colonel Wilson was helpless, couldn't walk a yard, and the pain in his leg was well-nigh too much for him. We were half a mile from camp. As I just told you, I'm a good shot. I asked the Colonel for his revolver, wanting to keep mine in reserve, and I let fly a couple of shots at the Boer gentlemen, reducing their number from six to four. 'Now,' said I to John Morris, 'you hold this, and help me to get the Colonel on to my back.' Of course, it would have been a good deal better if John Morris could have carried the Colonel, and I have done cover for them, for I was the best shot of the two. But that couldn't be. Colonel Wilson stands over six foot in his socks, and he's not a skeleton by any means. Private John Morris, though as plucky a one as ever drew breath, is only just up to regulation height, so

said I to him : 'Help me up with the Colonel, and cover us as best you can, and I'll run my hardest.' But the Colonel wasn't for doing it. 'Just put a bullet through my head, Carnaby,' said he, 'and run for your lives both of you, as fast as ever you can lay legs to ground.'

"Well, you can believe, ladies and gentlemen, I didn't take much notice of that ; he was disabled, and I was commanding-officer then." (Great laughter.) "So we got him up somehow. I'm afraid it was rather rough handling, but we'd no time to spare, and I was determined not to let the Boers have him. And then we ran. I never knew what it was to ride twelve stone before ; it was hard work, and I don't mind owning now, ladies and gentlemen, that I was in a blue funk the whole of the time. I kept counting the shots behind me, and wondering if Morris's revolvers would hold out without reloading, till we got in. 'I've killed one chap,' I heard him say, as he ran after me, and just then I got the Colonel up against a tree, for I couldn't go a step farther.

"Says the Colonel, 'You can't do it, Carnaby. What's the good of risking three lives for one ?'

"'Now, for God's sake, sir, don't slip down,' I answered ; 'I only want a minute to get my breath.' But I don't mind saying *now*, that I knew them three Boers were desperate, and how I should cover the distance—only two or three hundred yards—between us and the nearest outpost, which meant safety, I'll be shot if I knew. 'What are you doing, sir ?' I asked.

"'I've got my brandy-flask shoved into the band of my overalls,' he answered, 'but I can't get at it. Oh, here it is.'

"I don't think I said 'thank you' for it. I'm sure I never offered John Morris a drop. That flask was emptied down my throat before you could have said 'Jack Robinson ;' and then I buckled to again, and never stopped till I'd put the Colonel down inside the fortifications. And there he is, alive and well, and all owing to that drop of

brandy—I couldn't have saved him without it. As it is, Private John Morris and me have both got the Victoria Cross, and Colonel Wilson has got what's o' a good deal more value to him—his life."

After the immense and vociferous applause which greeted this recital, Colonel Wilson rose.

"I am not going to make a speech, Captain Allardyce, ladies and gentlemen," he said, "because I have an engagement in twenty minutes from this time, which I must keep. I wish to add to Sergeant-Major Carnaby's story a fact, which his modesty did not permit him to tell you; that, when my horse fell, he received a severe kick, which though fortunately it did not break the bone, yet laid open the flesh from knee to ankle, and must have given him the most intense pain during that long half-mile, when he carried me on his back from death into life. A braver man and a better soldier than Sergeant-Major Carnaby does not exist in my regiment or any other. He, like myself, is a moderate drinker, and he never, to my knowledge, was worse for drink in his life."

Amid tumultuous applause, the Colonel betook himself away, and before the disappointed chairman could put up another anti-drink man, a grizzled old regimental Sergeant-Major got up and asked if he might say a few words also.

"Captain Allardyce, leddies an' gentlemen,—Ye've been asked to beleave some varra woonderful facts this nicht," he began, in the varra braidest o' Scotch. "Will ye no beleave mine? They cam' under my ain pairsonal knowledge. I kenned a mon, wha was a sair haird drinker; he waur a civeelian—a mon mak'ing his twa pound a week, an' whiles as mony as three. But he drank, an' he drank, an' he drank; an' at the last the meenister o' his parish up an' spak tae him; an' says he: 'Sandy, my mon, ain o' these braw days ye'll be ganging tae a braw an' bonnie place, whaur there'll be rivers o' whusky, and moontains o' bread an' cheese, rinning doon wi' torrents o' spairkling gin, amang rocks o' scones an' still, quiet tarns o' pease brose.

It'll be a gey braw an' bonny place, my mon, an' hoo d'ye think ye'll fare in it ?

" 'I'll fare richt weel, mcenister,' said Sandy.

" 'D'ye think sae ? An' what if I tell ye that for aye an' for aye an' for aye, through a' the coontless ages o' etairnity, ye'll sit eying them rivers o' whusky an' them spairkling torrents o' gin, an' the braw bread an' cheese, an' the scones an' the pease brose, *an' ne'er a drap or a bite'll pass yer lips*; but ye'll go on for aye an' for aye an' for aye —aye craving an' longing, an' ne'er able tae satisfy the coorse animal appetites ye mad' yer gods i' this warld. That'll be a gey braw ending tae come till, eh, Sandy, my mon ?' said he.

"Weel, my freends, Sandy thocht sae tae, an' he thocht, an' he thocht, an' he thocht it o'er, till he cam' tae the con-cloosion that he'd better gie the drink up. An' sae he did —he becam' a total abstaaner. Weel, at the end o' three moonths, he had saved enough out o' his weekly wage tae buy a plot o' land." ("Hurra !" from the no-drink side.) "An' at the end o' six moonths he waur ready tae build a hoose on that plot o' land. An' at the end o' nine moonths, he waur ready to put a greenhouse outside o' that hoose. An' at the end o' a twalvemoonth, he waur ready tae build a stable tae that hoose. An' at the end o' fifteen moonths, he waur ready tae buy a canny little galloway tae put into that stable." (Immense applause.) "An' at the end o' a year an' a half, my freends," speaking very slowly and impressively, "*he—waur—ready—for—his—COFFIN*. Aye, my freends, total abstaenance didna agree wi' that mon."

I need hardly describe the scene, need I, gentle reader ? You may imagine how the audience roared and stamped and shouted. You can imagine how the keen whisky-loving old Scot, who had told the story, beamed and chuckled over the utter and complete sell at the end of it. Even the enthusiastic chairman laughed till he was purple in the face.

However, as soon as he had recovered himself, he got up and said, it was a very laughable speech, but not logical, at

which a voice from the body of the hall called out, "We don't want logic, we want facts."

"The meeting's a dead failure," Allardyce exclaimed in an agony to Laurie, who had long since given up all idea of revenge.

"I don't think so," Laurie returned.

But Allardyce was right—as regarded the no-drink side of the question the discussion was an ignominious failure. The people, especially the men of the Scarlet Lancers, had got roused, and were determined to have their fun. Seeing the chairman in consultation, as they thought, with two of their favourite officers, they called for them loudly, and Laurie was eventually half-pulled, half-shoved forward.

He made his bow.

He said: "My friends, I come forward very unwillingly to speak, because, on my word and honour, I have not got anything to say. I am like one of our royal Princes—I have said everything that has occurred to me on the subject. I said it this afternoon to Captain Allardyce. But here I am pushed forward to say something, so I will tell you what passed this afternoon between Captain Allardyce and myself. I assured him that I am not and never have been a hard drinker; I am a moderate drinker. Just at present I may say I am a total abstainer. I have had one glass of beer to-day. Now, according to Mr. Joppling's theory, I was drunk at some part of the day, but I must claim to be absolutely sober now—it was just one o'clock when I had that glass of beer." (Laughter.)

"Well, I am a moderate drinker—I own it. Captain Allardyce says he, too, used to be a moderate drinker, and he says that even moderate drinking leads to very bad results—constant headaches, unwillingness to get up in the morning, bad taste in your mouth, inability to take your regular meals, inflammation of the coating of——" but this was lost amid roars of laughter, and it was some minutes before Laurie could make himself heard and continue.

"I tell him I never had any of these bad things, and

then he says, 'See what a splendid example you can set.' A splendid example! I not only can, my friends, but *I* *do*. I let my moderation be known unto all men." At this, renewed sereams of laughter rang through the hall, and Laurie had again to wait a few minutes before he could go on.

"We have been told to-night," he continued, at length, "as a warning to moderate drinkers, that if a man drinks but one glass of beer he is on the high-road to killing himself with drink. I say, my friends, you might as well say, because a man keeps a horse and cart he is on the high-road to ruining himself on the turf." (Loud laughter and applause.) "Or I'll give you another instance. Let us suppose that a man sat down to a good dinner—say, a well-cooked sirloin of beef, with plenty of gravy, new potatoes, and a dish of green peas, all served up nice and hot, and a pint of good bitter beer to wash it down. Now, if that man, instead of eating a moderate dinner, ate *all* that was set before him, till he did not know where he was nor what he was doing, nor what his name was, nor where he lived, and generally speaking made a beast of himself, would that be any reason why *moderate* people, who would content themselves with a good plateful and no more, should be starved to death? I think not. At least, that's not my way of looking at it. But mind, I say if there is a man who cannot keep off drink, and really does not know how to stop when he has as much as is good for him, let that man take the pledge and stick to it. If there are any here to-night who cannot resist that particular form of temptation, come up here and sign the pledge, and, believe me, you'll be all the better for it. But if you do, don't turn round in a few months and say all drink is bad—it is not. The bad is in those who abuse the use of it. Beer and wine and spirits are all good in their way, but if the use of them is abused, why, like many other good things, they become injurious. Now, for instance, suppose a man was suddenly to take to drinking water by the bucketful, what

would be the effect? Why, he would get the dropsy.' (Laughter.) "I see Dr. Murphy laughing at me. Well, perhaps it wouldn't be the dropsy; but depend upon it, it would be something very horrid—we'll get Dr. Murphy to come up here and tell us what he would get. Or I'll take another line: there are many sailors off on long voyages who get the scurvy from eating nothing but salt meat. Poor fellows, it used to be a much more common thing than it is now—very bad it must be—but will anyone here have the assurance to get up and tell us that neither you nor I shall touch a slice of salted meat again, because some men have got the scurvy from eating too much of it? If anyone did, we should simply laugh at him. So with this great drink discussion. It is a bad, a very bad thing to be a drunkard—it is a *contemptible* thing; we must all agree that it is better, infinitely better, to be a total abstainer; but I maintain, my friends, that it is better still to be a moderate drinker; better, it is best of all. A moderate drinker, who can take a glass of beer or wine or spirits, and not want to go and get drunk straight-away; not one of your so-called moderate drinkers, who are at it furtively all day long—a B. and S. instead of the morning cup of tea—a pick-up here—a nip of whisky there—and who manage to spread as much liquor out over the day to have got jolly well screwed on if they'd taken it all at once. When I say a *moderate* drinker, ladies and gentlemen, I don't mean one of them."

As Laurie sat down the great hall fairly shook again with applause, Captain Allardyce clapping his hands as loudly as anyone.

"A splendid speech," he told Laurie; "but you hit some of us very hard, Laurie, very hard indeed."

"Specially Allardyce himself," murmured Bootles, in Laurie's ear. "By Jove, Scott, but you did wake 'em up. I hope they don't expect me to get up? I'd hammer and stammer like a school-boy who hadn't learnt his lessons. I say, let's be out of this," pushing his chair back and slipping

off the platform, followed by Laurie, rather ashamed then of the long speech he had been drawn into making.

"It was the most killing thing you ever heard," Bootles remarked, for the information of the officers still left in the anteroom. "Upon my soul, Sergeant-Major McDougall's yarn was inimitable. 'Eh, Sandy, my mon, but there'll come a braw day, when ye'll gang tae a gey braw and bonnie place, whaur there's rivers o' whusky an' moontains o' bread and cheese, rinning doon wi' torrents o' spairkling gin, amang rocks o' scones an' still, quiet tarns o' pease brose; an' for aye an' for aye an' for aye, thro' a' the coontless ages o' etairnity, ye'll sit eying them rivers o' whusky an' them torrents o' spairkling gin, an' the braw bread an' cheese, an' the scones an' the pease brose, *an' ne'er a drap or a bite 'll pass yer lips*; but ye'll gang on for aye an' for aye an' for aye—aye craving an' longing, an' ne'er able tae satisfy the coorse animal appetites ye mad' yer gods i' this world.' Upon my word, it was the most tangible idea of everlasting punishment I ever heard put into language, and poor old Ally looked as if he felt he'd had a deuced narrow escape."

"So he had," some one laughed. "It isn't two years since Allardyce had as near a squeak for it as inflammation of the coating of the stomach ever carries people."

N.B.—I, the author, think it right to say here, that this sketch, like many of my other sketches, is drawn from real life. If by any chance the principal speeches were not original, but only cribs from printed matter, I wish to say that I am absolutely ignorant of the fact, and that they came to my knowledge by word of mouth only.



## *THE VANITY OF BOOTLES.*

It was well known among the Scarlet Lancers that Bootles had a vanity ; he was, however, and rightly, only credited with one—the one generally spoken of as “the vanity of Bootles.”

The vanity of Bootles had nothing whatever to do with approbation of his own person, for he was not in the slightest degree self-opinionated, nor did he consider himself in the least good-looking. It did not consist of gay attire, for he was almost always the plainest and neatest of dress in the regiment. He never bloomed out in checks or stripes, as some of the others did ; he never wore fantastic-coloured shirts ; and his cotton cravats, in hue of Cambridge blue, if they did not happen to be white, were always fastened by the same pin—he had worn it the day he joined—a simple little ball of lapis lazuli, the size of a small pea, for which he had given fifteen shillings and sixpence one day in a shop in Bond Street, and had worn ever since. His watch chain was a plain cable of average thickness, and carried at the end of the drop-links a little gold locket, with two initials graven on one side, and a date on the other ; the initials were R. W., and the date that of the day on which Kerr had gone into his room and had asked him why the handsome widow, Mrs. Smith, had been crying ? Within the locket reposed a tiny curl of silken hair, which Mrs. Smith had clipt for him from Mademoiselle Mignon’s head, as she lay sleeping her long last sleep.

But this vanity ? Well, to tell the truth at once, it consisted of rings—four of them ; four broad gipsy rings, each

set with three immense diamonds, neither Cape nor of Brazil, but genuine, white, lustrous gems of Golconda, for which their owner had paid close upon a thousand pounds, and was considered by certain of his friends who were up in such matters to have got them cheap at that.

At first he had been a good deal chaffed about them; but as years passed by, and he became one of the elders of the regiment (being next to Allardyce, who was the senior captain), the Scarlet Lancers grew accustomed to his vanity, and never thought of noticing it or alluding to it in any way, though occasionally Bootles' rings were mentioned, quite as a joke.

"Hard up," laughed Hartog to Preston, who was growling one day over tenants who had bad harvests, and must have twenty-five per cent. of their rents remitted—"hard up, are you? Oh, you've only to wait round a corner some night, when Bootles is coming back to camp half screwed from that precious club down in Chertsey, and give him a rap on the head with that loaded stick you make such a display of sometimes, and then you'd have a cool thousand to go on with."

"Not a bad idea," returned Preston.

Bootles looked up and surveyed the pair, his usual "Ha, ha!" sending half a dozen fellows near into a roar of laughter.

"Just try it on, my friend," he remarked grimly to Preston. "By Jove, how I would smack you!"

"Yes; I've no doubt you would. I shouldn't have a chance," Preston returned. "How if I were to get Tony there to bash you, and then go halves with him in the swag, eh? Tony, how would that work?"

"Might do—only I should be tempted to keep it all for myself. All the same, Bootles, I rather wonder you're not afraid to swagger about night and day, as you do, with the value of a thousand pounds on your fingers. It would be a jolly awkward thing for you if you *did* get bashed in good earnest."

Bootles looked down at his diamonds, twinkling and flashing under the lamplight.

"Oh, pooh! I've worn them ever since I left Sandhurst—they've been all over everywhere with me. Besides, if anyone did cast eyes at them, his eyes might make acquaintance with them in a way he wouldn't altogether like. I once knocked a chap down—a low, coarse brute, who was just drunk enough to be cheeky; and, bedad, I left a dozen marks on his cheek that he'll never cast."

"How was it? What did he say?" some one asked, suspecting a story in the background.

"Why, I'll tell you how it was. I was staying with two aunts of mine, who live at Norwood; and one of my cousins—the one who married Clarke of the 140th—was staying there too. We went in by rail one night to the opera; and coming back by the last train, there was a regular crush. Just at the last minute, our carriage being filled, the most howling snob you ever saw shoved in, and swore there was room enough for *him*—plenty o' room—he'd 'set' next the young lady (meaning my cousin). However, I happened to be in his way, and I set my legs across the carriage, so that he shouldn't pass; and as the train started before we had time to turn him out, he had to remain standing by the door. Finding his way to my cousin blocked, the brute began to smoke—of course simply to annoy us. I told him to put his cigar out—said I'd report him on arrival if he didn't. That set the snob's tongue loose directly—he caught at the word in a minute.

"'Re—port me,' he sneered. 'Is that all you dare do, you d——d lardy-da swell?'

"Having ladies with me, I was **for the** time fixed. A man near the door knocked the cigar out of his hand, and I held my tongue. Fool of a cad thought I was afraid of him, and continued his taunts in language I needn't repeat; made divers remarks about these very rings, and more than hinted they were what he called *flash*. I never said a word; but at last, when we got to Norwood, and my ladies had

gone to their carriage under convoy of their footman, I turned round to the snob, who had got out there too, and said quietly :

“ ‘ You called me a d——d lardy-da swell just now ?’

“ ‘ Yes, I did,’ he answered ; ‘ and I stick to it.’

“ ‘ Then see how you like that,’ I answered, and just let fly straight out from the shoulder and caught him on the cheekbone. By Jove, the brute went down like a sack of potatoes, and bled like a pig when they picked him up.

“ ‘ I report this man for smoking in a first-class carriage,’ I said to the railway people who crowded up, ‘ for using bad language, and I think it very probable you may find he has a third-class ticket. Here is my card if you want me ;’ but they never did,” Bootles wound up almost regretfully.

“ He would take care how he tackled a lardy-da swell again,” Preston laughed. “ I never could see the intense irony of that form of reproach myself, but cads always expect it to fetch us particularly easily.”

“ It seemed to have fetched Bootles quite enough on that occasion,” put in Laurie, with a laugh. “ Seriously, though, I’ve wondered ever so many times at your wearing those rings. Do you say they’re worth a thousand pounds ?”

“ Thereabouts,” carelessly.

“ I don’t think it right,” said Allardyce severely. “ The display of such things is sowing temptation on every side.”

Bootles laughed.

“ Ah ! I might sell ’em and let it go to pay off the National Debt, eh, Ally ? But as I’m not inclined to do that, I wear them always, because I think it would be a deuced sight greater temptation if I left them lying about my room in my servant’s road. Besides, I always have worn them—some very queer kind of places those rings have been in, too—and I think I always shall. I’m used to them ; and besides, who ever heard of such a thing as garrotting nowadays ?”

“ Oh ! I don’t know about that,” Laurie asserted. “ My

old governor goes in for the perfect-safety idea—not that he ever wears anything of any kind worth more than ten pounds—but he drives and rides and walks about the country-side by himself, at all hours of the day and night, which, as he is a magistrate, and desperately keen after poachers, may yet be very awkward for him. He has been stopped three or four times—once by two fellows just out of gaol, who caught him at a dark corner and asked him what time it was. The moon shone out behind a cloud at that minute, and the Squire called out, ‘Oh, Joe Potter—Joe Potter! you big fool, do you want to get into gaol again? Go home to bed with you.’

“‘It’s Squire Laurie,’ exclaimed one of them.

“‘Yes, it’s Squire Laurie,’ my father answered. ‘I tried to keep you out of gaol last time, but I shan’t be able to do anything for you if you go on in this way.’ But nothing is a warning to the foolish old boy; he goes on his blissful way protesting he knows every man, woman, and child within ten miles of his own house, as if that has anything to do with it.”

“Oh, footpads have gone out of fashion,” Bootles laughed. “If anyone were to stop me, depend upon it, it would prove to be a poor devil starved out of house and home, knowing nothing at all about diamonds, and who’d be thankful for the half-crown one couldn’t grudge him.”

“Philanthropic way of looking at it,” said Miles, rather satirically.

“Well—I don’t know. I met three poor chaps yesterday afternoon trailing down to the workhouse, footsore and hungry and jaded. Poor beggars, they looked as if they hadn’t had a good square meal for a twelvemonth; and how the deuce they get in and out of the rags they call their clothes is a mystery. ’Pon my word, I could hardly eat my dinner for thinking of them.”

Bootles did not think it necessary to add that one of them had stopped and begged a pipe of tobacco, if his honour happened to have his pouch about him. That he

had drawn their three wretched histories from them—the usual histories of such sad ones—those who have been born of generation after generation of ill-fed, ill-housed, ill-clad men and women, with the result of being physically absolutely unable to bear the strain of severe manual labour, untaught, either as to any trade, or as to the rudiments of education. Pilgrims and strangers indeed, in a hard, hard world, where nobody wants them, and there seems no room for them even to die. And not happening to have his pouch about him, Bootles had turned his pockets out and divided the few shillings they contained amongst the three. He did not think it necessary to add that—that was Bootles all over.

“Oh, they’re jolly well-off in workhouses,” cried a young fellow who as yet had been silent. “There’s a lot of rot talked about workhouses, but I’m told their Christmas dinners are something magnificent. My sisters go every year to help to do something or other.”

Bootles looked at him with a glance of the most profound contempt.

“Did you ever happen to see some stuff called skilly?” he asked.

“No—I can’t say I ever did.”

“Did your sisters ever tell you what it’s made of? No! Then let me tell you that it’s nothing but boiled oatmeal and water, with a flavouring of cockroaches and dirt of all kinds. Jolly well-off indeed! I wonder if you’d call yourself jolly well-off with a basin of that, and a hunch of coarse bread for your dinner, after being all day on the tramp, too! Yes! jolly well-off indeed—your sisters’ two or three pet old men and women, whom they take their little packets of baccy and tea to, may be jolly well-off, for paupers. But the poor devils of casuals—heaven help ’em! for it’s precious little men are willing to do for them.”

“Oh, pooh—nonsense! pooh—nonsense!” interrupted a testy old staff-officer, who had been listening to the latter part of the conversation. “Mere sickly sentimentality.

The gaols are full, the unions are full—the reformatories are full—the hospitals, the refuges, the homes, and all the other humbugging institutions are full to overflowing with scoundrels too lazy to work, who won't dig, and who to beg are certainly not ashamed. The entire country is overrun by these scoundrels, who have never done anything but tramp about from place to place, and from town to town, pretending to be seeking work, but in reality merely cadging about for anything they can lay their hands on. I would soon rid the country of such scum—a given time for them to clear out altogether, or string 'em up—string 'em up. That's what I would do ; but no, my tramp-gentleman may just do as he likes—by George, he may even marry and have swarms of juvenile tramps, all brought up to the same scoundrel's life as himself. Bless my soul, Ferrers, and you a soldier—a man of the world, have enough sickly sentimentality to pity such brutes as those !”

“You old fool !” said Bootles under his breath, which instantly sent Laurie off into a smothered fit of laughter ; then aloud, he said, “Well, General, I look at it in this way : I was brought up in the country, and, as a lad, I saw a good deal of gipsy-life. We've all heard and read of the romance and the freedom of the life of the Zingari—it's all bosh and humbug ; there is no more wretched, miserable, comfortless way of living on earth, except it be that of the tramp. The gipsy has his tribe, and his tent or caravan ; the tramp, in nine cases out of ten, is not only homeless, but alone ; a married tramp is a very rare thing to meet with. It's all very well for a fat old chap to get up and bawl—

““Homeless, ragged, and tanned,  
Under the changeful sky ;  
Who so free in the land ?  
Who contented as I ?”

He, most likely, has just eaten enough dinner for three men, and there's a pretty girl playing his accompaniment,

with a view to impressing whom he throws an extra amount of expression into the last verse :

“ ‘ Once tender love watched at my side,  
Now from above her angel's my guide.’ ”

That's one story. The tramp shivering outside in the street tells another, and the two don't bear much likeness to one another. It's all very well to call a poor devil who has never had a chance—no, nor his father nor his grandfather before him—a scoundrel who won't work, and who ought to be strung up. How is he to work? Who has ever taught him to work? What would you and I have been, if we had been brought up in a gutter, a quarter-fed from the time we first came into the world—if we had had no fathers with money to shove us into the army and keep us afloat after we got into it? What would you have been now, General, if you had had a father who couldn't write his own name, and didn't know how old he was, nor where he was born, nor even what the number of the present year of grace happens to be, like that fellow Hutton Grath, who enlisted the other day? who couldn't teach you anything, because he didn't know anything himself? I know very well what I should have been—just a consummate scoundrel, ten times worse than nine-tenths of the poor beggars who fill the casual wards of a workhouse night by night—ten times worse. Half, nay, nine-tenths of them have never had a chance. Mark my words, that young fellow Grath will do well; he has never had a chance before, but to see him patiently polishing away at a button or a spur, because he's anxious to do his best, and, poor chap, never had a button or a spur to polish in all his life before, is a sight worth seeing. He has never had a chance till now, but, mark my words, he'll do well. You say they *won't* work—I say half of them *can't*; they are physically unfit for it; they don't inherit bodily strength enough to do it. I know it sounds awfully clever to say they *won't* work, too lazy to live, and want stringing up; but in reality it's talking



simple bosh. Is there a man in the world who would not rather live in a comfortable home of his own than in the casual ward? who would not rather have a meal of meat than of skilly? who would not rather have a whole coat on his back than go shivering in rags? Of course not, and people say and believe that the tramp goes without all these good things because he is afraid of hard work. I ask you, can you imagine any work in the world harder than going tramp, tramp, tramp, over miles and miles of hard road, with feet scarce shod, blistered in summer and frost-bitten in winter? No, by Jove! not you or anyone else can give me an illustration of work harder, more hopeless, more dispiriting, more wasting than that. When you can, I may think differently; but till then, if pity will do him any good, the poor devil of a casual possesses all the pity I have to give him."

The General was silent: perhaps he had nothing to say, for Bootles was a man of strong feelings and was kind of heart, and when he was led into talking, talked well and earnestly; perhaps the older man, who had been born and lived for the most part in India, was a little ashamed of the suggestion he had made for curing the woes of the unfortunate—I know not. Certainly no one else took up that side of the subject; they all felt that Bootles had got the best of it.

Well, it was but a few weeks after this, when the evenings were beginning to close in early, and the nights were dark and chill, that Bootles accepted an invitation to dine at a house just seven miles away from his quarters.

In a general way Bootles was in request for dinner-parties. He was very well off—that was known to everyone—his family was good, and he himself was not only amusing, but easy to please, and agreeable in many ways. Many and many an anxious hostess looked at him to help her out, if her party happened to be tedious; and he, being awfully good-natured, never needed a second pleading glance, but was wont boldly to throw himself into whatever breach

confronted him, and patch it up as best he could by a story or some new gossip that would do no harm to anybody.

On this particular evening, Bootles ordered his dogcart to be ready at a quarter to seven; so, as soon as he heard the wheels grinding along the gravel under his window, he buttoned his ulster, caught up his gloves and went down the stairs, thinking, as he pulled the collar up about his ears, what a cold night it was for the time of year, and half-wishing he had not accepted the invitation, quite wishing his destination was only one mile away, instead of seven.

"What a deuced good opinion people must have of themselves, to ask a man to drive seven miles to eat his dinner!" he thought; then, as he reached the steps, he said aloud: "How's the mare, Terry?"

"I think she seems all right now, sir," Terry answered; the mare in question had been out of condition for a week or more.

"That's good. What's the matter with your voice?" glancing at him sharply through the gathering gloom.

"I've got a bit o' cold, sir," the man answered carelessly; in truth, he could only speak in a hoarse whisper.

"A bit of cold!" Bootles repeated. "You ought to be in hospital. Why didn't Wainwright get ready to go with me, instead of you?" Wainwright was the second groom, and but seldom wore livery.

"Why, sir," Terry answered apologetically, "he's had the toothache for two or three days, and this afternoon it got so bad, that the doctor pulled the tooth out. And he says—the doctor, sir—that he'd better stop indoors to-night, or he'll get the green summ<sup>at</sup> or other in his mouth."

"O Lord!" muttered Bootles, half to himself, "*I* never get any green anything in *my* mouth;" at which Terry began to grin, for his master had teeth like those of a West Indian negro, and did not know what the feeling of toothache was.

"Well," he said, getting into the cart and taking the

reins, "you'd better stop indoors too, or you'll get a touch of green something on your lungs. One of the men at Highflight will attend to the horse. You'd better keep in with Wainwright, and if you're like that in the morning you must go into hospital. You can go up to my room, and ask Brown to give you that bottle of whisky in the cupboard—you and Wainwright can have it between you ; and you're not to get drunk, mind—d'you hear ?"

"Yes, sir—thank 'ee, sir," replied the groom, touching his hat ; then, as his master drove away, slapped his hand on his knee, with an exclamation which came from the very bottom of his heart, "B—y, but he *is* a good un !"

There was no doubt about that. At that very moment Bootles was driving quickly along, with a cutting north wind blowing in his teeth, thinking what a lucky thing it was he had asked that question about the mare.

"This would have given that poor beggar his death !" he thought, pulling the rug up a little closer about him.

Fortunately the party was a pleasant one, and Bootles felt well rewarded for his cold drive—so pleasant, indeed, was it, that he did not leave till long after eleven o'clock—his host then going out to the door to see him off.

"Are you alone ?" he asked.

"Yes," Bootles answered, with a laugh. "One of my grooms has had a tooth pulled out this afternoon, and had orders to remain in, lest he get a green summat or other in his mouth ; and the other couldn't speak for sore throat or something, so I came without one," slipping a half-crown into the groom's hand as he spoke.

"Are you sure you don't mind going alone ? It's a horrible lonely road through the wood, and the night's like ink."

"Oh no—not I ! I've the lamps to guide me as I go. Good-night."

"Good-night," was called back in return.

Of a truth, the road was horribly lonely, and the night as black as pitch ; not a star twinkled in the sky, and the

moon was not to be seen ; all above, around, before, and behind, was black, murky, impenetrable. Not that Bootles minded in the least. His horse was a good one, and safe, who knew his road home better than his master.

Bootles never gave the road or the light a thought. He was thinking of something very different and very much more attractive—of a little witch, with dark eyes and ripe red lips, he had left behind him in the warm, well-lighted drawing-room at Highflight ; a little witch with a voice like a siren, whose song was still ringing in his ears—a song he had not heard for years and years.

“’Tis the song, the sigh of the weary,  
Hard times, hard times, come again no more ;  
Many days you have linger’d around my cabin door,  
Oh ! hard times, come again no more.”

He could neither get the song nor the singer out of his head. What a pretty girl she was, and how tenderly and sympathetically she had sung that simple and sad little song ! He thought he should very much like to pit her against the old General, who had advocated “stringing-up” as a remedy for hard times. “Old fool !” Bootles wound up contemptuously—then pulled the horse up sharp.

“Hallo ! what’s the matter ?” he called out.

The lamp on the off-side cast a blaze of light on the ground, revealing the figure of a woman sitting on a heap of stones by the roadside—a woman who was sobbing and moaning.

“What’s up ?” Bootles asked.

“I’m dead-beat, yer honour,” she answered, in a hoarse voice. “I’ve been on the tramp all day, and I’m too late to get into Chertsey Union this night. I’ve had nought to eat but a crust o’ bread a lady give me, and I don’t know how far I am this minute from Chertsey—perhaps yer honour can tell me !”

“Oh, we’re over four miles from the town,” Bootles answered. “Woa—woa—keep quiet !” for the horse was impatient of being kept standing.

"I'll never do it," said the woman desperately. "I'm dead-beat now, and my feet's bare to the ground. I scarce like to ask it, but if yer honour would be so kind as to give me a lift——"

"Oh, all right ! (Woa, my lad—stand still, do !) Here, give me your box, and go round to the other side. Stand still, will you !" to the horse, who was suddenly seized with a desire to use only one pair of his legs at once—not evincing much care which pair he chose.

The box—a common band-box tied up with a bit of string—was handed up, and the woman went lamely, very lamely, as Bootles noted pityingly, round to the other side of the cart. Getting in, however, was a work of difficulty, for the horse grew more and more restive with each minute.

"Here, give me your hand," said Bootles, pulling his left glove off that he might undo the button of the rug, "and jump as soon as he stands."

"Thank ye, sir," she answered.

There was a moment's cessation of the horse's fretfulness. Bootles leant down and held out his hand, on which the big diamonds flashed brilliantly in the lamp-light, and the woman took it.

The next instant an exclamation of surprise broke from his lips, and with all the strength he possessed he flung the woman backwards into the ditch, and with a cut of the whip sent the horse tearing on his way through the dark and lonely wood as fast as his four good legs could carry him.

"By heavens, what an escape !" he muttered.

Half a mile farther on he passed two more figures—men those—waiting by the roadside—men who came forward as if to seize the horse by either rein. But Bootles was ready for them. He sent his long whip flying out, and caught first one and then the other neatly across the face, eliciting the loudest howls and the deepest curses he ever remembered to have heard.

Bootles uttered his grim "Ha, ha !" of a laugh and dashed on—his blood was up.

They covered the ground in no time, for the horse never lessened his pace, and Bootles never drew rein till he pulled up and shouted "Gate!" at the entrance to the camp.

Arrived at the mess he told his story, winding up, "By Jove, I'll never go to Highflight alone again. Those brutes meant doing for me. I wonder why—what the deuce have I ever done to them, I wonder?"

"They meant having your diamond rings, of course," one of the officers said, with a laugh. "Perhaps you'll be warned now, Bootles, that it is *not* wise to swagger about with the value of a thousand pounds on your fingers. And all for vanity, you conceited beggar!"

"Oh, it wasn't the two or three paltry rings!" contemptuously. "They meant doing for me for some other reason, depend upon it. And oh! by-the-bye, I came off with the band-box in my hurry. Let us have it in and see what its precious contents happen to be."

The bandbox was brought in, and its precious contents proved to be a pair of six-barrelled revolvers, all loaded and ready for use; and besides those, a carving-knife with a blade just eight inches long.

"That was intended to have made acquaintance with my ribs before this," Bootles said, handling it with grim amusement.

"I wonder, having those revolvers," said Laurie, "they didn't pot you from the road."

"Knife makes no noise—with shots there is always a fear of bringing keepers to the spot. No, a dig of that knife in my back—a groan—a tumble of a dead-weight into a ditch, and there they would have been safe for eight or ten hours and no clue whatever," replied Bootles gravely. "However, thank God, my eyes, or rather my senses, were just opened in time."

"And what opened them, Bootles?" some one asked.

"Why," said Bootles simply, "as soon as I touched it, I felt it was not a woman's but a *man's hand*."

## *A JUST CAUSE AND IMPEDIMENT*

### CHAPTER I.

"I SAY, Bootles," said Scott Laurie. It happened one afternoon that he had strolled into Algy Ferrers' room, and settling himself in the easiest chair he could find—there were three to choose from—he puffed away at his pipe for ten minutes without speaking. Then suddenly he broke the silence with his usual form of address: "I say, Bootles."

"Ah!" returned Bootles, looking up from his work, which was a caricature he was drawing in pen and ink of Allardyce in the last stage of intoxication, making a speech at a temperance-meeting, with the Colonel on the platform.

"What is it now?"

"Who's that chap up there?"

"Where? Oh—that's Kerr."

"Kerr—the man who exchanged with me?"

"Yes. There was only one."

"By Jove, what a handsome fellow!"

"Oh, I don't know that he was unusually handsome," Bootles answered. "Big, fine man, with handsome eyes and very white teeth;" then added, after a pause, "He altered a good deal after that was taken."

"Did he? I had a letter from Gore the other day—he mentioned him. Kerr has taken my rooms in their bungalow, you know. Gore likes him immensely, but says he's desperately gloomy—the gloomiest chap he ever knew."

"Ah! I shouldn't wonder."

"Gore thinks he must have something on his mind," Laurie continued.

"Quite sure of it, poor beggar!" Bootles answered.

"And he hates India."

"Poor old Charlie!" in tones of very real commiseration. "Hates India, does he? Poor old Charlie! I'm sorry for him, for he'll have to stay there."

"Why? Is he very poor?"

"Oh no; on the contrary, he's very much better off than I am."

"Then," opening his eyes to their very widest extent, "why the devil did he go?"

"Because he wanted to get away from England and everyone who knew him," Bootles replied. "Wanted to get away from himself most of all, and he evidently finds that difficult. I thought he would."

"You and he were great friends, weren't you, Bootles?"

"Who told you so?"

"Preston."

"What a long tongue that fellow has, to be sure—regular tell-pie. Yes, we were great chums one time—not of late. Not that we ever quarrelled or anything of that kind; but Kerr did something I disapproved of, and somehow we never got on afterwards. In fact, I never felt the same towards him, and I dare say I showed it plainly. At the same time I was very sorry for him, for I believe it simply ruined his life."

"Cards, I suppose?"

"Oh, my dear chap, no! nothing of that kind. Kerr was an out-and-out gentleman. O Lord, no! nothing of a disreputable kind like that. I don't know if I ought to tell you. I certainly shouldn't have done; only, if I don't, you may go on thinking it something so very much worse, in the eyes of the world, that I had better. I'll just give you the outline. Kerr was engaged to a girl—a lady, mind you—when he met with her sister, a widow, whom he did not



know as her sister at all. He fell in love with the widow and jilted the sister. Well, the shock killed her. Now, can't you understand how much such a thing came in between us? It utterly ruined Kerr's life, for not only had he the misery of the whole affair on his mind, but I believe he never realized how much he had cared for her until it was too late. When she was dead he would have given half his life to have blotted out the past. Of course, he could do nothing but regret; and regret isn't worth a rush in such a case, except to make a man take better care for the future."

"Then he didn't really care for the widow?"

"Oh no; a mere passing infatuation."

"And the widow?"

"Was as innocent of blame as you or I. She was a splendidly handsome woman, under thirty, and of course couldn't help her personal attractions. On my soul, I never saw a woman cry so bitterly in my life as she did the day *Mademoiselle Mignon* died."

"And she really died of it?"

"Oh, well, she lingered several months, each day growing weaker and weaker; and then, at last, she died. The doctors said she had no complaint—she didn't care to live any longer, and so she died; that was about the long and the short of it. It was rather odd that she herself predicted it, poor little girl, when she had no thought of Kerr turning traitor, as he did. I was in town on my way to Norway, and being, as I was then, Kerr's greatest friend, I went to see her, and as I had the afternoon to spare, I took her to the Academy. We were looking at a picture that suggested it—I really forget now what—a girl forsaken by her lover, or something of that kind; she looked at it for ever so long, and at last she said: 'If anything were to come between Charlie and me I should die.' Poor little soul, it wasn't a month later that something did come; and sure enough, it killed her."

"Was she pretty?"

"Very; and such a perfect little gentlewoman. By George, if she'd been engaged to me I'd have taken jolly good care that nothing or nobody ever came in between us—not even Venus herself. I asked her to run the risk of it, but she wouldn't."

"He doesn't look the sort of fellow to do like that," said Laurie, examining the photograph more closely.

"No more he was—in a general way. In that case, he lost his head completely; and when a man loses his head, depend upon it, it won't be very long before his wits go after it."

"No! By Jove, what a romantic story! And she regularly died for love," Laurie was saying, when the door opened, and Preston entered, hearing and catching up the three last words.

"Died for love—pooh! nonsense! fiddle-de-dee! Nobody ever did that in this world, any more than anyone ever died of the toothache. It always seems to me that there's a strong similarity between love and the toothache—take it from beginning to end. You have a tooth, say—perhaps it's a real beauty, white and well-shaped; you're awfully proud of it, and take no end of care of it; you buy floriline and what not, by way of preserving it, and showing it off to the best advantage; you take every precaution that it may not get damaged, and carefully refrain from using it monkey-fashion, when the nut-crackers don't happen to be handy; in short, you study that tooth's comfort, and flatter yourself there isn't such another in the world. All well and good; but by-and-by it is not at all impossible that there comes a change—your tooth begins to pain you, pain docks you of your proper amount of sleep, spoils your dinner, and makes life itself a burden to you. And what's the consequence? Either you keep your tooth, because you haven't pluck enough to get rid of it, and you let it go on paining you; or perhaps you patch it up with a nervine or a narcotic. If you do that, what then? Why, after it has had its sop of attention, the pain stops for a bit; but

just wait awhile, and see if it don't begin aching again—aching devilish hard this time. And what's the effect? Your life is ruined—simply ruined; for after awhile it will affect all the other teeth, and there'll be the very deuce an' all to pay in consequence; your life ain't worth having, for you dare not meet a wind, or get into a draught, lest you take cold; you dare not touch ice-pudding at dinner, or an iced peg when you come off a beastly inspection, feeling as if you'd swallowed all your peck of dirt at one gulp; you daren't eat sugar to your strawberries, and when the gal you're dead nuts on offers you a piece of nougât, you have to tell a lie and say you don't like sweetmeats. That's the sort of life the toothache brings you to. But if you determine to be a man, to get rid of it altogether, what then? Why, you go to a dentist-chap, and he puts a beastly forceps-thing into your mouth, which makes you feel, for a moment, as if body and soul were parting company; and then you go away with a great hole in your jaw, that aches for a bit more furiously than ever the tooth did. But afterwards, my friend, afterwards—why, to be sure, there's still a gap where the hole was, but *it don't ache*. Love's very much the same kind of thing—the especial niche in your heart that was filled by some jade, who wasn't worth a third part of the thought and care you expended over her, may remain empty after you've cut yourself adrift from her; but you find consolation—if you've any sense, that is—in one of the other goddesses you happen to know—one that, as likely as not, hasn't a trace of falsity about her. Now there was that chap there"—pointing to the photograph of Kerr—"the man who exchanged with you. I couldn't convince him, though, in a general way, he was as sensible a fellow as you could wish to meet in a day's march. But he wouldn't hear reason on that subject. 'Take my advice, Charlie,' I told him. 'Don't shilly-shally over it—*have it out*.' But poor old Charlie wouldn't listen to reason—said he couldn't, only wished he could, and all the rest of it; and ended by going off to India. The best chap gone wrong

about a woman it was ever my lot to know. Fine fellow, wasn't he, Bootles?"

"Very," returned Bootles, without looking up from his work.

"I think I never saw a fellow so utterly gone for love as he was," Preston resumed. "He was engaged to some girl down in the West Country, and then he got on with that widow—I never could make it out; and old Charlie never enlightened anyone on the subject. Either he jilted the girl, or the girl jilted him, or something—anyway, Charlie was over head and ears in love with the widow, and I fancy she didn't see it. By George, how handsome she was—like a Greek goddess in flesh and blood! And one fine morning she vanished, and Charlie never looked the same after. Poor old chap! he wouldn't do as I advised him, and have it out; he'd have got over it by this time if he had."

"I say, Preston," put in Bootles mischievously, "you must have had a good many of 'em out."

"I grant you."

"Got many gaps left?"

"I grant you—a whole row of vacant cells, of which I have locked the doors and lost the keys ages ago. If there are skeletons in them, I let 'em lie there in peace. I never disturb the bones of a past which I cannot alter, and don't particularly want to—I don't believe in routing out old bones; there's something positively indecent about it. No! you take my advice, Laurie; don't hesitate and shilly-shally over it—have it out."

"I!" cried Laurie; "oh, I haven't one to come out!" with a very heart-whole laugh.

"All the better for you; but bear my advice in mind, against a bad time coming. By-the-bye, Bootles, I came in to ask you to lend me some stamps. I'm due at the Fords' for lawn-tennis, and don't want to go into town."

"Of course; they're in that silver box on the chimney-shelf—help yourself."

"Oh, here they are, thanks, a thousand times. I'll take half a dozen—bring 'em back to-morrow; by-bye."

"What a duffer he is!" remarked Bootles, as Preston clattered noisily out; "good-natured, and all that, but *will* talk such rot, if he only gets a chance. There, now, I fancy that will fetch Allardyce considerably. We'll roll it up in his napkin at dinner to-night. Now, what are you going to do? Let's go down to the recreation-ground—the band's playing there this afternoon."

"Very well," said Laurie.

He generally did say "very well" to any proposal of Bootles'. Indeed, his was not a headstrong nature—perhaps the only time he had ever set up his will against Eliot Cardella's, was in going to inquire after little Mrs. Hey's husband, when that individual was down with typhoid fever. So on this occasion he got up, looked at himself in the glass, perfumed his handkerchief out of one of the scent-bottles on the table, settled his blue cotton tie to a nicety he had not attained in his own room, and finally announced that he was ready.

"Come along then," said Bootles impatiently, putting his wanghee under his arm whilst he buttoned his glove. "Come along! What's the good of standing ogling at yourself any longer, you conceited beggar!"

"Yes—I know—I'm ready," pulling himself together, and settling down into the army swing, which, since Bootles went at the same steady pace, took them over the two miles lying between the camp barracks and the recreation-ground in next to no time.

Now the recreation-ground at Chertsey was just about the most generous thing of its kind you can possibly imagine—well laid-out gardens, with a bandstand, and lots of chairs; a reading-room, tennis-courts, a good many trees and shrubs, and some very convenient out-of-the-way corners, much frequented by the younger members who happened to be in that blissful stage of spooniness when nothing but a sense of temporary isolation is needed to make them feel

at peace with themselves, each other, and the whole world.

Blessed period—the age of content! I call it so because, I' faith, oftentimes it is so very, very little that contents them. I like to see it, just as I like to see a married couple who are what the world calls “making fools of themselves.” I like to see people making that sort of fools of themselves, particularly when they are young and good to look at; there is something wholesome and refreshing about it—very wholesome and very refreshing. I don't think we old folks are half as lenient to the young ones as we might be—as we ought to be. We are too apt to forget the days, heaven knows how many years ago—so many, that most of us would rather not talk about it—when we, too, were in the age of content; when we hadn't become dried-up old bachelors and sour old maids; or, still worse, hardened old married people, given to matrimonial jokes, very antique and threadbare, having a sort of faded outside show of pleasantry on the surface, worked, alas, too often on a canvas of bitterness, crossed by incompatibility of temper.

I think, almost every day, what a pity it is that the age of content does not last for us all a little longer; that it, like so many other good things of this world, *goes off*. Well, go off it certainly does, and the majority, even of those who have enjoyed it most themselves, are miserably intolerant of it in others; perhaps that is why the young ones are so fond of sneaking away into corners and shady arbours. Be that as it may, the recreation-ground at Chertsey was very well adapted for the furthering and spinning out of the age of content.

“It is a jolly place,” Laurie exclaimed, as they crossed the centre lawn, where the rank and fashion of Chertsey were promenading to the strains of one of Waldteufel's most taking waltzes. As yet, he retained too keen a remembrance of weary India to take English beauties of green turf and unspoiled complexions quite as a matter of course.

“Yes, not bad,” Bootles answered. “Well, what is it?”

for Laurie had all at once jogged his elbow, with an energy which set his funny-bone tingling, and made him feel as if he had a galvanic battery at his fingers' end.

"I say, look at that girl."

Bootles did look.

"Oh, pooh, she's not even good-looking."

"Look at her feet," Laurie remonstrated.

Bootles did look at the feet.

"Very neat," he admitted. "Very neat indeed. Puts 'em down well and picks 'em up very cleanly ; all the same, you needn't put my elbow out of joint because a gal happens to have a pair of neat feet." Then, finding that Laurie made no reply, Bootles gave him a return jog with the elbow, entirely disregarding the galvanic-battery feeling : "I say, Laurie, don't stare at her in that way, for heaven's sake ! she'll think you're a grabby out of F. lines."

Laurie straightened himself up instantly.

"I never saw such a divine pair of feet in my life," he remarked plaintively. "Let's sit down, and then I can look at them in comfort."

That pair of feet finished him ; to use a vulgar, but expressive phrase, they completely "settled his hash." He went back to barracks and raved wildly about them for days to Bootles :

"Of all the ladies in Chertsey, young or old, Bootles, that's the one I admire—more than admire, by Jove !"

I must say Bootles was fairly sympathetic, seeing that he did not much admire the lady.

"Yes, fine well-grown gal, with **very neat feet**," he remarked.

Laurie was disgusted ! The age of content does not call a spade a spade—its geese are all swans ; young women are not young women—they are goddesses. Bootles called the divinity who had made such an impression upon him "a fine well-grown gal, with neat feet," for which Laurie, having fallen headlong into the elevating and beautifying age of content, could have found it in his heart to punch his head.

And yet, when you come to think of it, it was a very fair measure of praise ; there are so many fine well-grown girls who have not neat feet, and those with neat feet are so often *not* fine and well-grown.

## CHAPTER II.

IT was a very strange thing, but Scott Laurie, try as he would, couldn't for the life of him get to know the fine well-grown girl who had a pair of neat feet. He certainly did try, for some weeks, his very best. He saw her, almost without exception, every day—sometimes twice. By continually watching her, it was wonderful, though, how well he seemed to know her, and how thoroughly he believed he understood her moods.

Her moods, by-the-bye, appeared to him to vary a good deal. Sometimes she was very gay and lively, and sometimes she looked decidedly down in the mouth, as he called it.

At such times he fancied the little feet moved with less alacrity, the whole air of her person and gait became subdued and quiet. Scott Laurie told himself he liked her best so. When he saw her, as it must be owned he frequently did, absolutely choking with laughter, he had a very shrewd idea that the gay laughter was *at* somebody or other ; more than once he saw an expression so mischievous flit across her face, that he felt his own lips relaxing into a smile out of sheer sympathy. Yet he had a horror himself of being made fun of, and while he cast the most adoring eyes at his "lady," as he always called her to Bootles, he entertained an unconquerably nervous dread lest, when he did contrive to make her acquaintance, she should find something to laugh at in him.

I must confess that Bootles was thoroughly sick to death of Laurie's "lady ;" but then, you see, he heard so very much of her, that it was small wonder that it should be so.

'Oh, hang it all, Laurie ! do drop the woman,' he cried



one day, when Laurie had treated him to an extra dose, and his patience was quite exhausted.

"I *can't* drop her," returned poor Laurie plaintively. "And I can't get to know her either, worse luck."

"Then why don't you go up to her boldly and tell her so?" Bootles suggested impatiently. "Why, bless you, I'd have *eaten* her by this time."

"Oh, how could I do that? A man can't treat a lady as if she were nothing but a little milliner-gal."

"No, you wouldn't treat a little milliner-gal like a lady; it wouldn't do, eh? Well, then, why don't you write to her?"

"When I don't even know her name?" forlornly. "Besides, what the devil should I say?"

"Say? How on earth should I know? I always know what to say when I write a love-letter."

"A love-letter!" scornfully.

Bootles laughed good-naturedly.

"Oh well, I thought you were really serious about it," he said easily.

"Serious," Laurie echoed. "I should think I am serious —*ra*—ther."

"You really want to marry her?"

"I should think so!"

"The devil you do!" in his surprise borrowing Laurie's own pet ejaculation. "Regular over head and ears, and that sort of thing?"

"Utterly done for," Laurie asserted, with mournful pride in the announcement.

"Oh! poor beggar, I thought it was half chaff. Well, I've been here longer than you have, and of course I know more people. I'll make inquiries about the young person."

He was wonderfully good-natured, this Bootles. Not three hours later he happened to be standing at a shop-door in Chertsey talking to a man he *knew*, when the object of Laurie's admiration passed by.

"Oh! I say," said Bootles, interrupting a remark about

the command of a certain regiment, which, as a matter of course, had fallen on the wrong man, "excuse me for interrupting you, but can you tell me who that young girl is?"

"The big one?"

"Yes."

"No. I—I—forget the name. Dear me, now, what is it? Miss—Miss—Miss—no, I'll be hanged if I remember it. She was engaged to some fellow here a few regiments back. His name was—was—no, be hanged to it, I forget his name, too. Or, stay, perhaps she wasn't engaged. I'll not swear to it, anyway. Only, that the man was desperately in love with her I will vouch for. I saw it myself, and there is no mistaking that complaint when it's bad."

"What was he like?"

"Oh, a fine chap enough. She's a fine girl, ain't she?"

"Ye—es; neat feet."

"Very neat feet—very. And, by Jove, sir, you can tell nowadays what kind of feet and legs a woman has to walk upon. When those beastly hoops were in fashion, you had to take 'em on trust a good deal."

"Ah, well, you have to go on trust for a good many things," Bootles returned with a laugh. "But, as you say, these tight frocks do show off decent feet, and a decent figure, too. Now there's a Miss Copeston here in town—knew her?"

"Yes."

"Gad, that girl *is* a shape, and no mistake about it. Waist that looks as if you might span it. I shouldn't mind trying, with my arm; round as an apple it is. If you'll believe me, those two scraggy Sanders girls were chaffing her the other day about it. Told her they were sure it was pinched.

"'Of course it's pinched,' said she, as pat as possible. 'I'm three-quarters of an hour every morning strapping it in. I have a machine on purpose, and my maid turns the handle till I can't stand it a minute longer; and when she stops, the buckle fastens with a snap.'

"And then, when she'd let 'em pity her ever so long, she pulled a measuring-tape out of her mother's work-basket and offered to bet anything they liked that her waist measured more than theirs. If you'll believe me, hers was just over twenty-three inches, and neither of theirs came up to nineteen. Of course, one is as round as an apple, the others like a couple of deal boards put together, with a silk frock over 'em."

Major Lawson laughed heartily at the simile.

"And there is something deucedly unsatisfactory about two deal boards put together, eh?"

"I should think so," echoed Bootles. "Sort of thing that ought to be put down by Act of Parliament."

Presently, when he went back to barracks, he strolled into Laurie's room.

"Oh! Scott, that little gal you've lost your wits over——" he began.

"Yes. What about her?"

"Why—er—nothing very much; only you ain't the first."

"Hey?"

"There's been somebody else, but Lawson of the Artillery, who told me, couldn't remember his name—nor hers either, for the matter of that."

"The—devil!" cried Laurie; but whether the expletive was in consequence of Lawson's failure of memory or the fact that the lady had had an admirer before himself, I cannot tell you, for I do not know.

I think it must have been chiefly at the nature of the news, for during the few following days Bootles wished many and many a time that he had held his tongue; he was heartily sick of the whole concern.

Laurie gave him no peace whatever. His continual and apparently unending stock of questions had been used to try Dickson's patience pretty considerably in the old Indian days. If Dickson could but have heard him plying Bootles, he would have said that his old comrade had got query-on-

the-brain. As Bootles himself said plaintively, "It was awful—it was never-ending."

Did he think she had cared anything about this fellow? Did Lawson say he was good-looking? Did he think she was engaged then? It was just possible the fellow might be on foreign service, in South Africa or elsewhere. Had Lawson said anything about it? Was the fellow—Laurie, by-the-bye, pronounced it "fella"—in the cavalry, or only a liner? Did Lawson say he thought she had cared much about him then? Would he ask Lawson again if he remembered her name, who she was, where she lived, and if he was quite sure she wasn't engaged?

"No, I won't," Bootles answered.

Eventually, however, simply to get rid of Laurie's tormenting questions, and his never-ending rhapsodies, Bootles did make an effort, not only to discover the lady's name and where she lived, but to make her acquaintance—and after a time he succeeded.

"Scott Laurie," he said coolly, going into that love-sick gentleman's quarters, where he found him singing, between the puffs at his pipe, a melancholy ditty—enough, as Bootles thought, to make one sick to listen to.

"If in after years  
The tale that I am dead shall touch thy heart,  
    Bid not the pain depart,  
But shed over my grave a few sad tears to me."

Bootles groaned within himself, and promptly tipped the singer, chair and all, backwards, on to the old Persian carpet.

"I'll tell you what it is, Scott Laurie, my friend," he remarked, looking down with a laugh at Laurie's astonished face on the carpet. "I'll tell you what it is. That voice of yours is a mistake. By Jove! instead of being a soldier, one might think you were a Methody-parson practising for a love-feast." He had the wildest ideas of the programme of such an entertainment.

Laurie gathered himself together into a tailor's heap in front of the fire, and looked up at Bootles, his elbows on his knees and his hands idly clasped.

"Do you happen to know what they do at a love-feast?" he asked.

"Not I. How the deuce is it likely?"

"Well, first, they lock the doors."

"Ah!"

"And then they put out the gas."

"Oh!"

"And then they change places."

"What for?"

"Oh! I don't know—to give a pleasing variety, perhaps. They've a regular shuffle in the dark, and you find yourself between a plump cook, fourteen stun and troubled with shortness of breath and peppermint lozenges, and a scraggy young person who professes herself frightened to death—'scared out of her wits,' is the correct phrase—and insists upon holding your hand for protection—don't make any objection if you protect her a little further by putting your arm round her waist."

Bootles looked at him with a disgusted air.

"Scott, you don't mean to say *you* ever sat between a fourteen-stun cook, all breath and peppermint lozenges, and put your arm——"

"I?" laughing, "no; but I've been told so."

"Oh, that's another thing. And what do they do then?"

"Then? Oh, they turn the devil out."

"Very proper, too," said Bootles gravely; "but how do they know him?"

"Oh, they don't; but they scramble about on the floor and under the seats, and a general pandemonium is the result. Shouts of 'Glory' and 'Hallelujah,' interspersed with cries of 'I've got 'im!' 'Ee's kicking powerful strong,' etc. And after that they tell their experiences; and then, when they go away, each of 'em gets at the door a bun or

a biscuit with three measly currants in it, and that serves them to prate largely for a week about grace and holiness, and all the rest of it."

Bootles laughed.

"Well, apropos of turning the devil out—I've been to tea at the Lessingtons'."

"Yes, I know. They asked me, and I said I was on duty. Why, there wasn't a devil there, surely?"

"I don't know. That gal you've been raving about the last few weeks was."

Laurie fairly groaned.

"Just like my luck," he cried, dismally. "And you were introduced to her, of course?"

"Oh! well—yes—of course," Bootles admitted.

"Well, go on," impatiently. "What's her name? What's she like? Charming, of course—that goes without saying. Did she say anything—at least, did you find out——"

"Did I say, 'There's a great ass, called Scott Laurie, in my regiment, who's been more like a drivelling idiot than a sensible fellow for the last few weeks, because he's fallen over head and ears in love with you; but he has heard that some one else was once—if he is not now—in the same boat with him; and he wants to know what boat you were, or are, or will be in?' Did I say that? No, my friend, I did not."

"Oh, Bootles, you are an ass!" testily. "What's her name?"

"Travers," returned Bootles, seeking about for fusees or matches; and finding none, sacrificing very cheerfully a voluminous and closely-written letter, beginning "My dearest Algy," a letter written in a feminine hand. "Travers. Mrs. Lessington called her Kitty, once or twice."

"Ah!" Laurie leant back against a big chair, too entranced to ask another question. "Kitty—Travers! Kitty!"

"Yes," remarked the other, puffing at his pipe with a

vigour that soon made the air cloudy. "Ve-ry nice, homely, everyday sort of name—ve-ry."

"Ugh!" growled Laurie, in disgust.

"Don't go very well with *yours*, all the same," Bootles persisted.

"It does—perfectly."

"Think so? Well, I don't. No! Kitty Laurie—Kit-tee—Laur-ee—why, old chap, it's as bad, every bit, as 'Enery 'Olmes or Polly Solly. By Jove, I once knew a girl called Polly Solly—a very pretty girl she was, too—as fine a girl as your Miss Travers; and she married such a brute, a self-sufficient little cock-robin in the Line, with a long chin and two left legs. Always seemed to me," Bootles continued plaintively, "that there must be something radically wrong about a chap whose legs both walk the same way—must be. I must say now," sending clouds of smoke up to the ceiling in a dreamy, reflective kind of way, "that for my part I do believe in the outward and visible sign, I really do; it stands to sense, by Jove, that a chap with a clean face must have a better mind than a chap with a dirty one. Now the fellow that married Polly Solly, you never saw such a bumptious sixpennyworth of copper in all your days, and those two legs used to go left-about-turn with a defiance that was maddening—to anyone with an eye for drawing, that's to say. They chaffed poor Polly tremendously about him when the news first came out; but Polly was only a simple sort of girl: she made one invariable answer—she used to say he was very pleasant in conversation. I believe she discovered afterwards that he could be quite the contrary. Lord, I never shall forget hearing them tell our old Colonel the news. Fitzroy had the regiment then. He used to say Polly was a very fine girl; and when some fellow imparted the news, he stared at him a minute and then he blurted out, 'Good God! Will she walk out with that devil?' Lord, how we all roared!" going into fits of laughter at the remembrance of it.

"But, Bootles," breaking in ruthlessly on Bootles' remi-

niscences, "tell me something else—is she thinking about that other fellow, do you think?"

"Not at all unlikely," Bootles returned, deeming it not unwise to damp his comrade's ardour a little.

"What does she talk like? Is she shy at all?"

"Shy—oh, by Jove, no! Tongue like a steam-clapper, and talks nineteen to the dozen; talks amusingly too, but makes fun of everything and everybody. Thinking of you, you know, Scott, I told her it was odd I hadn't met her before—having been quartered here so long."

"Yes?"

"She said directly: 'Oh! well, we go away a good deal, and when we are here we don't go about much. I *hate* going out.'"

"Oh!—h!" cried poor Laurie blankly. "Well, and what then?"

"Why, you see"—half-apologetically—"you see, thinking that you really do seem to be so desperately serious over the girl, and that I must make some progress for you whilst I had hold of her, so to speak, I told her that one of our officers had been wanting to know her for some time."

"Quite right. Well?"

"Well, and she began to laugh directly," admitted Bootles, rather unwillingly. "And upon my word I wished I hadn't said anything; but after a minute she said, 'How nice of him!'"

"Said I, 'He'll be awfully disappointed he didn't come with me this afternoon;' and then she asked if you were good-looking."

"Oh! and what did you say to that, Bootles?"

"Why, old man," returned Bootles, with the utmost gravity, "I wanted to do you a good turn, and so I stretched a point and said you were."

Laurie got up and regarded himself steadily in the glass at which Bootles burst into a great roar of laughter.

"There, now, you needn't go ogling that ugly phiz of



yours in that way," he cried. "Miss Kitty Travers is not by any means such a beauty herself that she can afford to turn up her nose at you."

A fat pincushion—Heaven knows where he had got it; in a bazaar lottery, perhaps, for across its bloated red velvet surface was worked in white glass beads a device utterly unsuitable for the toilet-table of a cavalry officer, "*Welcome, little stranger*"—went flying across the room at Bootles' head; but ducking, he dodged it, and betook himself off to dress for mess.

As for Laurie, he sat down in a chair and repeated over and over again to himself what Miss Kitty Travers—*his lady*—had said:

"How nice of him!"

Poor fellow, I doubt if he was ever so supremely happy and contented again—not for many a long day, certainly. In time he made his lady's acquaintance—he pronounced her quite as charming as he had expected to find her—also, he announced to Bootles that she was the most perfect lady he had ever known.

But somehow they didn't get any further. They didn't get on; or rather, *he* didn't get on. Taking things all round, it cannot be said that he was fortunate in any way indeed, he was particularly unfortunate. He had a great many things in his favour, but somehow they seemed to be of no benefit to him. He was very handsome; in truth, more than handsome, for he was *good-looking*—a nice, clean, fair skin, not much the worse for ten years of soldiering; nice white teeth, eyes that could and did look straight at you, and a smile that lighted up his face until it became simply radiant.

A fine, well-grown fellow, too; long of leg, and straight of back—a man who could be seen in a crowd—as I heard a private's wife say about him only the other day, "a man of distinguishment."

Then, not only was he good-looking and good—and he was good *core-through*, as the North Country folk say—but

he was also very comfortably off, and with the prospect of some day being very well off indeed ; for, though Laurie never liked to think about it, still less to *build* upon it, the grand old Squire who reigned over the old Queen Anne mansion, so snugly buried in cherry and apple orchards, could not, in the natural order of things, live for ever ; and as he, since poor Willy's death at Isandula, was now the eldest of the young Lauries, he would some day come to rule in his father's stead. Nor was that all—the Laurie family was as old as any money-loaded parvenu without a grandfather to his share could desire, the Queen Anne mansion being *quite* a new idea, and the supplanter of a manor-house dating so far back that I would rather not trust myself on the dangerous waters of details, but commend myself to the safer refuge of generalities.

But whatever impression all these good qualities of person and position made upon Miss Kitty Travers, the truth may as well be owned at once, that they did not get on—they didn't exactly hit it off. Why they did not manage to do so I really cannot say—perhaps because Miss Kitty Travers was so much attracted by the handsome junior Captain of the Scarlet Lancers.

As I have said, Laurie was decidedly **unlucky**, and invariably, in his anxiety to say the right thing, he always managed to say just the wrong one. It was always so ; the girl might indeed have been forgiven for thinking that often he went to great pains to try how disagreeable he could be to her. If he had cared nothing about her, he would have chattered away without considering what he was talking about. Then again, if Miss Kitty Travers had cared nothing at all about him, she would not have cared in the least whether he said the right thing or the wrong. As it was, they always began by getting along like a house on fire, and then he said something or she laughed in the wrong place, or, as often as not, she made a joke of which he couldn't see the point though his very life had depended upon it, though he generally had an idea that, in some

roundabout way or other, she was poking fun at him ; and so—why, they always ended by tacitly falling out worse than ever.

And at last the Scarlet Lancers got their route. Laurie, infinitely the spoonier by reason of the many backslidings his wooings had had, made a last desperate effort, and, after getting on very well indeed for a day or two, unfortunately allowed himself to be drawn, led, piqued, stung into making a hit—mentioning no name, of course, yet uttered in a way no woman could possibly misunderstand—at that shadowy bugbear which stood always in the background, haunting him persistently, *the other fellow* ; and, naturally enough, it threw him back further than ever. So, having succeeded in getting nearer to an absolute quarrel with his lady than he had ever been as yet, he betook himself back to Chertsey Camp in a rage, and resolved that he would give the whole affair up, and have nothing more to do with her at all.

“Do as Preston advised you,” said Bootles, laughing, when he had aired all his grievances to him. “*Have it out.*”

“I think I will,” said Laurie wretchedly. “Life’s not worth having at this rate.”

“And you’re really serious, old man ?” asked Bootles, pitying his unhappiness.

Laurie nodded.

“Have you asked her outright ?”

“I tell you I’ve never had a chance,” cried Laurie miserably—“never the ghost of a chance !”

“Then take my advice—put it to the test. Ask her the question plump, and, take my word for it, she’ll jump at you.”

“Think so ?” eagerly.

“I do. You’ve a clear fortnight. I’ll bet you a fiver, when we meet at the end of the march, you’ll ask for congratulations.”

“And you don’t think the other fellow——”

"Oh, hang the other fellow!—cut him out. What if she did care for him once? You're the best man of the two, every way—make her care for you better," Bootles cried impatiently. "I bet you a fiver she jumps at you—positively jumps at you. There, I can't give you any more encouragement than that."

However, for once, Bootles was wrong. A few weeks later, Laurie turned up at their new quarters, where Bootles had been settled some days, and in reply to Bootles' questions, replied that it was no good. So far from jumping *at* him, Miss Kitty Travers had very ruthlessly and relentlessly jumped *on* him, and Laurie was miserably forlorn, and more down on his luck than ever.

"The fact was, she didn't care a brass farthing about me," he wound up. "And, by Jove! I must do her the justice to say she let me see it plainly enough from the very beginning—never did anything but laugh at me and turn me into ridicule. I suppose the truth is, all the heart she had went to that other d——d fellow."

Poor Laurie! Bootles thought it over, like a philosopher trying to solve the theory of perpetual motion, and the more he thought about it, the farther off did he seem from arriving at any satisfactory conclusion. So at last, other interests and thoughts forcing themselves into his mind, he gave up thinking about the matter, unless it happened that Laurie looked rather more melancholy, or was more restless and unsettled than usual.

However, a few months later, while doing the Academy, he found himself face to face with Miss Kitty Travers; and although he said to himself, "Hallo! here's that perfidious little jade who smashed poor Laurie," he stopped and spoke to her.

To his surprise, she turned very red and then very white—seemed nervous and anxious in her manner, yet was very charming, and evidently desirous that he should stay and talk to her a little.

Bootles did so and being very curious, and likewise

endowed with plenty of cheek, purposely mentioned Laurie's name.

"You knew Laurie very well, Miss Travers?" he remarked.

"Yes."

"Good fellow, is he not?"

"Oh, I should say very!"

"And so good-looking, eh?"

"Handsome man I ever saw," returned Miss Travers promptly.

"Yes; regular good fellow all round. I don't know a man I'd trust before him. Upon my word, I'd trust him with my very life," Bootles wound up, getting quite energetic and dramatic in his friend's cause.

"I, too," murmured Miss Travers absently.

"Why, he was just raving mad about you," Bootles blurted out. "Why in the world didn't you take him?"

Laughter never seemed to be very far away from that girl's lips. The absurd side of every subject occurred to her instantly, no matter of how serious a nature the subject might be. On that occasion the point of the joke presented itself to her at once; her eyes filled with laughter, and the grave curves of her mouth softened into smiles.

"Why, you see," she answered, "*he never asked me.*"

## *OLD LOVES OR NEW ?*

### CHAPTER I.

“Is Captain Josselyn in his room, Fraser ?”

“Yes, surr, he is,” was the reply.

The tall young man in the frock-coat of an officer went one way, and the big dragoon clad in grey garments that had the cut of a first-rate tailor, went the other, that way being towards the kitchen, which he shared with Trevor’s servant.

“Tell you wot it is, Greene,” Fraser remarked, as he kicked the door to with a crash, and deposited a great pile of clothes on the table ; “tell you wot it is, this ’ere ’unting’s the werry doose ; wot with evening boots an’ mawning boots, clothes an’ ’unting things, I’m just wore out.”

“Yer should ha’ gorne to the doctor’s,” the other growled. “Yer wouldn’t ’ave ’ad no tops to clean there.”

Fraser drew down the corners of his mouth in huge contempt.

“Babbies to nuss an’ missus to scream a’ter one all day long. No, no ; Collins tried that, an’ ’ad to get hisself docked for absence without leave, just to get shut on ’em. Besides, I’ve no mind to leave the Capt’n—a real good un the Capt’n is ; just the same to-day as wot he was yesterday—won’t be no different to-morrer.”

“I’ve seen ’im do cold shoulder pretty strong, for all that,”

remarked Greene reflectively, as he varnished a boot with an artistic, if very thick finger.

"Won't 'ave some on 'em, not at no price," Fraser asserted, with a certain air of triumph. "Just this way, the Capt'n is: all werry nice and civil as long as they keeps their distance, but don't come a step nearer. 'I sees where you are,' he says, 'an' if I wants you, I'll come for yer.'"

"Ah!" murmured Greene, more reflectively than before. Trevor was wont to say of his servant that he was like the old lady's parrot—he'd very little to say, but was a devil to think.

"Well now, the other day," Fraser went on, warming to his subject, "he was going to dine at Brodscombe, an' he says to me, 'Fraser,' he says, 'don't you forget to go down to Mrs. Forrest's for my flower.'"

"So about five o'clock I went down to Mrs. Forrest's, and Mrs. Forrest, she says to me, 'I think as 'ow your master ain't so very friendly with Mr. Allondaile.'"

"'Not so very,' says I. 'For why?'"

"'Why,' she says. 'The last time the Capt'n was in here, Mr. Allondaile comes in, and instead of singing out, as they mostly does, 'Hollo, old chap, I'll walk into town with you,' he just turns 'is baek and stands staring at them goody-bottles; and Mr. Allondaile, he looks at him an' grins a bit to hisself, and then he buys one o' the yellow roses an' out he goes, in double-quick time.'"

"Ah," remarked Greene, dabbing away at the heel, "just wot I said—cold shoulder."

"Aye, but he's a good un, the Capt'n is," Fraser repeated; then changed his tone: "Now then, COME IN, can't yer? D'yer want to hammer the door in?"

In reply to this address-courteous, the door was slowly pushed open, and a shabby, oldish little man, with an overdone bland manner, made his appearance.

"Air you Mr. Trevor's servant?" he asked civilly of Fraser, who was the nearest to him.

Fraser, without condescending to reply, jerked his thumb

in Greene's direction, and went on brushing a pair of overalls so as to send as much mud-dust as possible over the visitor. Greene looked up from the boot which he was just placing carefully beside its fellow on the hearth.

"Is Mr. Trevor at 'ome?" the polite stranger asked.

"No, Mr. Trevor ain't," Greene returned, poking the fire with the toe of his boot.

"They told me just now in the guardroom that he were in barracks," the shabby little man persisted, with conciliatory meekness.

"Well, I ain't responsible for no guardroom lies," returned Greene, beginning operations on another boot, "an' I tell yer he ain't."

"But them's Mr. Trevor's clothes an' things ye're doing."

"And wot if they are?"

"Why, I should think they're pretty good evidence as 'ow he's at 'ome," assuming a little more authority.

"Oh, yer can *think* anything *you* please," the dragoon said, cheerfully. "But all I can say *is*, you must be a most orful ignorant party to suppose becos an orficer gets a twenty-one-days' leave, he takes every pair of boots an' overalls he's got with him. Some gentlemen may, in course; but *my* master ain't one o' that sort—— An' if *you* PLEASE," suddenly growing lively, "just keep your greasy fingers orf that 'elmet, I don't clean 'elmets for the like o' you to smear over."

"Oh, beg parding—very sorry I'm sure, sir," exclaimed the intruder, with a deference probably due to the dragoon's six feet of well-trained bone and muscle. "I suppose now, yer wouldn't let me go upstairs, and just squint into your master's room, just to satisfy my gov'nor that he really is away, yer know?"

"Oh, I don't know that I mind partic'lar," with an air that would not ill have become a lord. "I must finish this 'ere boot though. I say, Fraser, are you going up? Then just take the sword master borrered yesterday o' Capt'n Joselyn, with 'is compliments, an' he's werry much obliged."



"All right. Just open that door for me, mister, will yer? Thank yer," said Fraser, departing with a pile of carefully-brushed and folded clothes on one arm, while with the other hand he held gingerly—for it had just been cleaned—a sword. If the shabby little man could have drawn that sword from its scabbard, and examined the blade, he would have found, beneath a stag's head and the motto "I shine," a monogram composed of two letters, an A and a T, which being interpreted, stood for Alan Trevor.

Having looked into Trevor's room and seen it was empty, Fraser went along the corridor and knocked at a door, then entered, and closed it carefully behind him.

"Hollo, Fraser!" exclaimed his master.

With the impassiveness of a lump of lead the dragoon propped the sword against the tall chest, which served its owner for clothes-chest and dressing-table alike, and began laying the pile of clothes therein.

"Bum-bailiff, surr," he explained, sitting back on his heels and looking as stolid as if he had merely brought the order-book, and had a headache into the bargain. "Wawnts to see Mr. Trevor, and 'as promised to go away quiet if Greene'll let him see into Mr. Trevor's room."

"What the deuce does he want there?" Trevor laughed from behind a cloud of smoke.

"Satisfy his gov'nor, surr—so he says."

"And what did Greene tell him?"

"Twenty-one days' leave, surr—there they go," jerking his thumb towards the door.

"By Jove! I must hear this," Trevor cried, springing from his chair, in spite of a warning, "You'd better not," from Josselyn.

But Trevor being one of those determined characters, hard to lead and absolutely impossible to drive, was not to be persuaded, and gently unfastened the door, just as Greene's growling voice passed it.

"Just like you sneaking bum-bailiffs," he grumbled,

"can't believe aught a chap tells yer. There now—do you see that room? Do you see as 'ow there ain't no one in it but ourselves? Now, didn't I tell yer; and mightn't yer 'a saved yer legs the trouble o' mounting them stairs?"

"But wot's the fire in for—if Mr. Trevor's gone away?" they heard the shabby little man ask suspiciously, whereat Trevor's gravity gave out, and he went off into such an agony of laughter that Fraser instinctively tried to pull him back again into Captain Josselyn's room.

Greene, hearing the laugh also, made haste to answer so as to cover it.

"Only went away a'ter lunch to-day," he growled. "Yer don't suppose we rakes the fires out the minute 'is back's turned, do you?" losing his matter-of-fact air all at once, and speaking in shrill indignant tones.

"Greene's losing his temper," muttered Fraser. "An' he's like Old Nick when he's roused."

Then the strange voice broke in again.

"Well, you see, I didn't egzactly know," it said humbly; so very humbly that the fire of Greene's anger was somewhat appeased. "And where's 'e gone to—if I might ask the question?"

"Oh, yer might arsk till ye're black in the face," returned the big dragoon, with complacent contempt. "An' if I wanted to tell yer I couldn't. It's somewhere in Scotland—I forget the name;" then suddenly perceiving an opening for a little romance, added, "'E's gone to see 'is young lady," at which Trevor burst out laughing again immoderately.

"Oh, 'e's got a young lady, 'as 'e?" was the eager question of Greene's visitor.

"In course—most orficers 'ave," returned Greene scornfully. "Yes; he's 'ad a rare stroke o' luck," he continued, with that blissful disregard to the changes of grammar and aspirate common to the lowest stratum of society inside a barrack. "A rare stroke o' luck—met with a young lady of title—a real beauty to look at, and fifty thousand pounds

tied to her tail ; they're going to be married next month—as soon as Mr. Trevor gets 'is long leave, that is."

"Hindeed !" Whether the bum-bailiff did or did not believe this statement I cannot of course say, but he expressed an opinion, "as 'ow there's some folks as won't be sorry."

"I dessay not," returned Greene, a fine air of indifference in his tones, quickly followed by a witheringly sarcastic imitation of the little man's greasy accents :

"An' now I 'ope as 'ow yer satisfied, yer obstinate old beggar ; and—oh, by gum, 'ere's the Colonel a-coming ! 'Ere, come in, an' let me shut the door—if he sees yer——"

"Stop a bit. I've a little job for 'im, too," cried the shabby one eagerly ; and stepping forward with an alacrity which eluded the big dragoon's strong and would-be detaining grasp, he thrust a pink paper into the Colonel's hand.

"Hey ! What's this ? Er—Greene—ugh !" as he perceived the nature of the thing, crumpling it up in his hand and turning upon Greene fiercely. "Er—what's this man doing up here ?"

"Mr. Trevor, sir," returned Greene, saluting with a hand that shook in spite of himself, and feeling as ashamed and crushed as if he had shot a fox or otherwise disgraced himself.

"Er—who's that ? Fraser ! Oh, well, turn this scoundrel out of barracks instantly !"

"But Mr. Trevor—I want Mr. Trevor," the bum cried, evidently placing very little dependence on Greene's yarns.

"Not in barracks, sir," in an agonized voice from Greene.

"Turn him out—at once !" shouted the Colonel angrily ; and as a matter of course, in the hands of those two sturdy dragoons, the shabby little personage of the law had no choice but to go.

Meantime, Colonel Wilson, foaming with rage, knocked at Josselyn's door and went in ; the first object that caught his eye being the missing one, Alan Trevor.

"Oh, Colonel, I'm so sorry !" he cried, trying hard not

to laugh. "If Greeno, poor chap, had only known—if he had only had the faintest idea of it he would have managed to keep him clear of you."

The Colonel was, however, busily engaged in investigating into the nature of his pink-toned *billet-doux*.

"Two pounds sixteen and sevenpence," he exclaimed; "expenses, thirteen shillings; total, three pounds nine and sevenpence; and, if you please, for a glove-bill, of which the first pair was bought in September, three months ago. I'll tell you what it is, gentlemen, the country is going to the devil."

"Gone there, Colonel, long since," asserted Trevor cheerfully.

"Except the army," put in Josselyn.

"You mean the White Dragoons?" cried Trevor, with a laugh.

"By Jove, you are right," rejoined the Colonel, lanching at once into his favourite grievance and forgetting his tick. "By Jove, sir, these old women are bringing it to something. Half the officers in the service are more fit to be corresponding clerks in a Manchester cotton-warehouse than to command troops. Actually, they've given the command of the White Lancers—the *White Lancers*—to Knowles of the 400th, passing over St. Vincent, who's been twenty years in the regiment, and is one of the best cavalry officers in the service. Gad, I expect they'll be making me Inspector-General of Canteens next!"

"Let us hope not, sir," laughed Josselyn.

"Oh no, sir," put in Trevor; "the old women are not as bad as that. The worst they'll give you to inspect will be yeomanry."

"Yeomanry!" repeated the Colonel in disgust—to him it was a very bad worst. "And they'll dignify it with the name of 'Auxiliary Cavalry.' By-the-bye, did that rascal want you?"

"I believe he did. You sent him away, didn't you, Colonel? Don't trouble, pray, to send after him. I can

manage to bear my disappointment, I think," at which the chief departed laughing, his good-humour quite restored.

Perhaps only a soldier can realize the smothered roar which burst out as the door closed behind him and the ring of his spurred heels died away in the distance.

"To think of old Five-per-Cent. getting let in for a writ," Trevor shrieked, when he could speak. "Greene, poor chap, very nearly spoilt himself. If the Colonel hadn't had that bit of paper for himself, he'd have sent him to look for me in double-quick time."

"Which would have been rather a pity, after all his romancing about the lady of title, with fifty thousand pounds to her fortune," answered the other, amusedly. "I'm afraid, Alan, my friend, you'll find such a *rara avis* rather difficult to meet with."

"Yes, by Jove, you're right, Josselyn," returned Trevor promptly, and straightway he fell a-dreaming of a certain pair of lovely sapphire-blue eyes, proud as they were brilliant—of a regal crown of gold-coloured hair—of a dainty face, fair as a flower, and with plenty of soul and fire and pluck written on its regular features—as Greene, in his rough way, had put it, "a real beauty to look at," with a title; but alack! alas! without the fortune of fifty thousand pounds.

Truly she was a beauty to look at—Greene was quite right in his hit there—this blue-eyed, golden-haired lady of title, the daughter of an Irish earl, so poor that he could not even keep his ancestral castle in repair, and had to live in one corner of a vast half-ruined barrack, large enough to have quartered a regiment of soldiers.

Trevor had met her a few months before, when on leave and staying in Ireland, and had fallen in love as desperately as if he had never been in love in the whole course of his seven-and-twenty years.

On the last day of his stay at Ballyshannon he had gone over to Cuffe, and had told her that never, as long as he lived, should he forget her; no, not if he were to live for a

thousand years. And then he had bent and kissed the soft little hand he would have given the world to have called his own. He had looked back at the old castle with something like a rush of tears to his keen eyes—eyes by no means given to that kind of thing—and then he strode away with a muttered curse at the poverty which had held him back from claiming the love of the only woman he had ever cared for; in that moment of grief he altogether forgot others whom he had left behind him, under very similar circumstances. In the face of this newer, it seemed to him sweeter love, other passions of the kind called tender had quite slipped his memory.

And yet there had been many of them. With many a fair lady had he played “at bondsman and at queen,” happy for an hour, a day, a week, yet utterly and entirely careless of the great harvest of pain he sowed for others to reap; heedless quite of a great and wise Book, which tells us, “As ye sow, so shall ye also reap.”

There are many who forget it—I think most of us might plead guilty to the charge. As for Trevor of the White Dragoons, he had come nigh to the time when he should gather in his harvest.

## CHAPTER II.

“**THEN** you’re off to-morrow, Josselyn,” Trevor said a few days later, when he went into his friend’s room and found Fraser in a state of stolidly puzzled chaos.

“**Yes.** You don’t get your leave for a week, do you?” Josselyn answered. “No, Fraser, no—don’t put that hair-wash amongst the shirts. Stick it inside a boot, and put it in a corner. You get your leave next week, don’t you, Alan?” turning once more to Trevor.

“**Yes—Monday.** Where do you spend yours, by-the-bye? Town?”

“**Probably part of it.** I’m going to Cuffe for Christmas.”

"To Cuffe! I—I—didn't know you knew them, Josselyn."

"I know Lord Cuffe and several of the sons very well. I don't know Lady Rosamonde," Josselyn replied, in answer to the implied question in Trevor's remark.

"You'll enjoy it. Cuffe is one of the most deliciously tumble-down romantic old places in the world—a kind of Liberty Hall in carved oak and antique silver, with an ultra-aristocratic air of shabbiness over everything. I always think of that song Sergeant Farrar sings at the penny-readings :

" 'The tender grace of a day that is dead  
Will never come back to me.'

All the restoration on earth would never give Cuffe quite the look it has now."

"And what about Lady Rosamonde?" Josselyn asked lazily, wondering that Trevor, the susceptible, had not launched into a vivid description of the sole daughter of the house.

"Lady Rosamonde," repeated Trevor stupidly, and with a deadly pain at his heart—a heart that had been faithful for eight whole months, and therefore had a right to ache if it liked. "Oh, Lady Rosamonde is charming. By-the-bye, you'll remember me to her, won't you? Say everything civil for me."

Josselyn looked up curiously.

"Is she young?"

"Eighteen or nineteen."

"Good-looking?"

"Extremely," avoiding Josselyn's eyes, and looking out of the window.

"I'll say all that's civil," said Josselyn, suddenly understanding how it was he had not heard of this young Irish beauty before.

"Lord Cuffe did ask me for Christmas, too," Trevor said presently. "That is, in his happy-go-lucky, hearty way, he

said, 'You'll come to us when you get any leave, won't you? I dare say he has forgotten all about it; and I don't know that I should go, if he were to ask me.'

"And where are you going?"

"Oh, I shall have to go home, of course. And I've three or four engagements already," Trevor answered carelessly.

So the subject was dropped, and on the following day Josselyn went off on his long leave, and journeyed straight as steam and rail could take him to the Liberty Hall in carved oak and antique silver, and saw for himself the ultra-aristocratic air of shabbiness which hung over everything—saw, and admired, just as Trevor had done before him.

Yet most of all did he admire the daughter of the house—the Lady Rosamonde O'Shaughnassy, who came across the great hall to meet and welcome him—a slim, gracious figure in a blue velvet frock, fastened from throat to hem by crystal buttons, cut in diamond-fashion, which caught the light from fire and lamps, and made a twinkling rivulet of light adown her; a golden-haired, blue-eyed aristocrat, with dazzling teeth and a white skin, who made Josselyn, senior Captain of the White Dragoons, feel all at once as if, up to the present moment, life had not been worth the living.

"You are very welcome to Cuffe," she said, in a rich, low-toned voice, that had a touch of the brogue in it. "You must be very tired."

Two very commonplace ordinary sentences, yet Josselyn was speechless; as speechless as men, who have not frittered away their hearts over endless flirtations, are when their hour and their fate have come upon them.

"You must be very tired," in the soft tones that thrilled him through and through. "It is very good of you to come all this way from your pleasant gay quarters to a dull tumble-down old place like Cuffe."

Josselyn's eyes wandered from the girl's beautiful expressive face round the old hall, with its carved oaken



panels, its quaint china, its grim suits of armour, its old family portraits. He glanced at the great fire blazing on the open hearth, at the huge figure of his handsome host ; and then his eyes returned, with an expression of content, to the girlish figure in the velvet gown.

"I am very well satisfied with the exchange," he told her, with that wonderful air of courtesy which regimental training brings to such perfection.

Lady Rosamonde, whose pretty head was filled with hero-worship, set it down to companionship with Trevor, instead of giving Josselyn credit for any extra polish of manner that Trevor possessed, as she ought to have done.

"If you were as weary of pleasant gay quarters as I am," Josselyn went on, smiling, "you would appreciate your leave as much as I do. I know that the term 'pleasant gay quarters' *sounds* most attractive ; but the reality is a dreary barrack-square, a noisy mess-table, where you know every joke and story, and have heard them a thousand times—where you know exactly at what part of the entertainment to expect them. If that was your life, and you found yourself as I do now, at Cuffe, why, you would feel as if you had got out of Purgatory into Paradise."

Lady Rosamonde smiled, admitting to herself that not even Alan Trevor could say a graceful thing so gracefully as this. And then she gave a fond little sigh to the memory of that Peri—otherwise Alan Trevor—languishing outside the gate of Paradise, in the uncongenial noise and racket of the mess-table and the stale jokes—that mode of life his brother-officer styled Purgatory. If she could have seen him at that moment, seated jockey-fashion on a chair in his room, recounting to Bill Brookes—his best friend, after Josselyn—what a ripping fine gal he had seen in St. Thomas's Street half an hour before !

"Eyes like saucers, and as black as my boots, Bill—I give you my word of honour," he was saying, holding a big meerschaum at arm's length, and sending a rapturous cloud of smoke up into the air. "As black as my boots, and a

shape like the Venus of Milo, by Jove! Plenty of size, and no mistake about it. Gad! she was a stepper!"

"Never admired the Venus of Milo, myself," returned Bill Brookes sleepily. "Such a deuce of a foot, and such a thundering thick waist—why, a man's arm wouldn't go round it."

"Ah! well, I like a good armful myself," Trevor asserted. "Never did admire your little slender women. And this one hadn't a thick waist—on the contrary, I believe I could have spanned it," putting his two large hands together, and making a girdle of them.

"Then she must have been pinched," returned Bill, with decision. "Pinched-in women always make me feel uncomfortable—make me think of all the internal business jammed together higgledy piggledy, don't you know. Now, whenever *I* get married I shall take devilish good care to choose a woman who won't bore me with the consequences of pinching—indigestion, dyspepsia, 'feeling low,' and being 'out of sorts,' and all the rest of it."

"Lord! what a fool you are, Bill!" Trevor laughed, knocking his pipe out against his heel. "What do you know about it?"

"Oh! I know a good lot about it," the other said, seriously. "And I'll tell you how I know. When Riversleigh—my brother—came in for the title, he thought he ought to get married, so he looked about. The Brookes always were deliberate business-like sort of people, and his looking about took him a couple of seasons. Still he didn't seem to see anything to suit, and we all began to think he didn't mean taking the plunge. However, one fine morning he announced to the Marchioness that he had made up his mind, and the young lady was trotted down to Riversdale to be inspected. My lady pronounced her perfection, and all the rest of us followed suit—I happened to be on leave at the time. She really was as pretty a little woman as I'd seen for a long time—gilt-coloured hair, and a very nicely got-up little face. Her great claim to good looks,

however, lay in her figure—and it was a pretty little figure, too—short, very plump, like a pouter-pigeon in good condition ; and a waist—by Jove ! it wasn't any thicker than her throat. Span it ! I give you my word of honour, Riversleigh could not only span it, but had three inches to spare. I used to wonder how the devil it was she didn't snap in two ; only, as she didn't, I came to the conclusion it must be natural to her. I stayed at Riversdale nearly three weeks with her, and the more I wondered the more I watched her, and the more I watched her the more I wondered. Poor old Riversleigh had always been a bit gone about rowing, and at that period his craze came in very nicely, for they used to go spooning down the river in a comfortable old tub that nothing would upset. They were on the river all day long, morning, noon, and night, and used to talk rapturously about the yacht that was fitting out for their honeymoon-cruise. Miss D'Arcy declared she gloried in water, whether salt or fresh ; but it's my belief it was for nothing else than that it gave her no exertion. Well, one day, after a lot of persuading, I got her to go out on horseback, and very pretty she looked in her habit, I must say. Riversleigh was obliged to give her a kiss when she came downstairs, and told her she ought to ride every day, she looked so well. Of course, that was all right. She flushed up, and smiled, and all the rest of it ; said she thought she must ride more ; explained to me that she hadn't ridden much, she'd always been so delicate. Then Riversleigh put her up, and off we went. Well, we hadn't gone above half a mile before she pulled up, with a pain in her side ; thought she would get off and walk home, and very nearly turned hysterical over it ; looked reproachfully at me, and said I'd nearly shaken her to bits—that was because I had suggested a canter on the grass at the side of the road. Eventually, Riversleigh took her home at the slowest crawl imaginable, and Nell—my sister, who married Lucy, of the 7th—and I went on together.

“‘She seems very delicate,’ Nell said to me, when we’d watched them out of sight. ‘She can’t walk a mile without being utterly exhausted, and here she is on horseback just knocked up in the same way. I can’t make it out, Bill,’ she said; ‘she *looks* all right in the house.’

“‘She can put a good square meal out of sight,’ I answered, ‘for I’ve watched her in amazement, considering the sixteen-inch waist Riversleigh’s so proud of.’

“Nell said she thought it was the waist and the heels combined, and declared that, though she was only a couple of inches taller than Miss D’Arcy, she was seven and a half inches more round the girth. And said I to Nell, ‘Keep it there, my dear—keep it there.’ We had a very jolly ride, and two hours later, when we got back to Riversdale, we found Ethel on the sofa, and Riversleigh fanning her, and oh! all the rest of the humbug—tea, smelling-salts, and a general air of exhaustion. That was the regular thing all the three weeks I was at home, and a few months later they got married. Well, they’ve been married five or six years, so I suppose she’s about thirty; but, if you’ll believe me, though Lady Riversleigh has gained a couple of stones in weight, she prides herself yet on having a waist under twenty inches. She never walks a yard if she can possibly help it; she never goes upstairs if she can possibly get anyone else to go for her. I wonder they don’t have a lift, or a Carter’s carrying-chair, for she says it gives her palpitations. Of course, she has never been on a horse since she was married; and Riversleigh, poor devil, has given up hunting, and everything else, because my lady’s nerves won’t bear the agitation her affection puts her in, when he is likely to get into any danger. So Riversleigh is tied to his wife’s apron-strings all day long, a kind of head-nurse; and as she has a headache, or feels a little low about every other day, he has a nice time of it, poor devil. I know I wouldn’t stand in his shoes for something.”

“Then I suppose he is fond of her yet,” Trevor said, filling the meerschaum again.

“O Lord, yes—sickeningly so; though she has lost all her beauty except her waist. Lately she has got to look blotched and coarse, though she *ought* to look little more than a girl. I asked our old doctor, the last time I was at home, what had made my lady lose her complexion. Of course, as I expected, the tight waist was to blame. ‘If Lady Riversleigh would take plenty of exercise, and let her waist out, she’d be the prettiest woman in England,’ the old chap said. I’ll tell you what it is, Trevor; for a woman, tight-lacing’s the devil.”

“I tell you this woman was a regular clipper,” Trevor asserted valiantly; “and I don’t believe she was pinched a bit.”

He didn’t admire little slender women. He liked plenty of size, with eyes like saucers, and as black as your boots. If Lady Rosamonde could only have heard him! But she could not, and so that tender little sigh for him, in the very novel character of a Peri at the gate of Paradise, escaped her lips.

Trevor had caught her fancy! He had come into her uneventful life like some brilliant meteor, and had left behind him the memory of his handsome, bronzed young face, his winning manner, his silver tongue. Never had any young lady two more different strings to her bow than had Lady Rosamonde in Josselyn and Trevor. Josselyn would win her, if he could, by every means that lay in the power of his cool, firm, practical mind; Trevor—I am a little ashamed of Trevor already—Trevor, having frittered away his heart in little bits, at the beck and call of every pretty pair of eyes that had glanced at him, every soft-toned voice that had chained his fancy for a moment, would only value her really as long as there was somebody else who would value her more; and Lady Rosamonde, not having had sufficient experience to enable her to tell t’other from which, let her fancy fix itself on Trevor, little dreaming that Trevor’s fancy had gone wandering after a pair of big, bold, black eyes, and a waist, as Lord William Brookes expressed it,

with all the internal business jammed together higgledy-piggledy.

There is a poet who puts it less prosaically :

“Birds quick to fledge, and fly at call,  
Are quick to fall.”

### CHAPTER III.

A BARRACK-ROOM ; that is to say, a room in the block of buildings known in Carminster Barracks as the officers' quarters.

Not a very inviting apartment ; for the two little windows—that would neither of them open wide enough for a man to put his head out comfortably—looked over a yard, and had an extensive view of kitchens and soldier-servants in every variety of undress—not exactly military undress.

The room was not more than fourteen feet square, and boasted of the usual articles of barrack-room furniture—the usual barrack-room fixture-fender, openly and honestly innocent of varnish and blacklead alike. It caught your eye the moment you entered the place, and proclaimed that there was no deception about it. It was not like the hideous regulation-chairs, that had been clad in cretonne petticoats to hide their native ugliness ; nor yet like the tall chest opposite, which, clad in the same garb, had to serve a three-fold purpose—first, when on the march, as a case for the chest of drawers on the other side of the room ; secondly, when settled down, as a wardrobe as to its interior ; and, thirdly, as a dressing-table as to its exterior. No ; there was no sham about the fender. On the floor was a worn Turkey carpet, and drawn up to the fire were two large chairs. Propped against one of these was a sword, while on the seat lay a forage-cap and a much-worn belt. The other chair was occupied by a sharp blue-and-tan Yorkshire terrier of the smallest bodily proportions—under five pounds, her owner declared—but of brain and heart-power the largest the world had ever known.

Just as the little travelling-clock on the mantel-shelf struck four, Coddles set up a sharp bark ; then subsided into silence, accompanied by much shivering and shaking of her little, silky person.

"What's up, Coddles ?" murmured a sleepy voice from the cot in the corner.

Coddles answered by another bark.

"It's only Greene," Trevor told her ; and, sure enough, a minute later Greene entered the room, carrying two letters in one hand, and in the other the pair of newly-varnished boots which is the almost normal accompaniment of a soldier-servant.

"Quiet, Coddles, quiet !" cried Trevor to the dog, who, assured of Greene's identity, was dancing about his feet, in imminent danger of getting her little toes crushed under his heavy boots. "What is it, Greene ?"

"Letters, sir," was Greene's laconic reply.

"Ticks, I suppose," muttered Trevor to himself, or maybe to Coddles, who on hearing him speak had ceased her attentions to Greene, and had established herself on her master's breast, where she sat bolt upright, quivering all over, and with a desperately keen eye to the stamps on the two envelopes, which she looked upon as her especial right.

"Oh, by Jove !" exclaimed Trevor energetically, half-raising himself from the cot and toppling Coddles over on to the floor. "Hallo, Coddles ! tumbled overboard ? Hurt, old woman ? there, never mind ! Jump up again."

How that letter had made him jump ! I ought to have put a dozen notes of admiration, properly to express the magnitude of the start which had made such complete shipwreck of the blue-and-tan Yorkshire terrier. There was nothing very wonderful about it—a plain square envelope bearing the address :

*"Lieutenant Alan Trevor,  
16th Dragoons,  
Carminster,  
England ;"*

and on the reverse a coronet. There was nothing very wonderful about it, nor about the writing, which was a big, firm, round, man's hand—the hand of a man more fond of his gun than his pen.

Trevor, however, tore open the cover, with a sigh so profound, that Coddles, fearing another shipwreck of her small person, clung to him with all her might, and gave another indignant bark by way of remonstrance.

"I can't go, of course," he said aloud, when he had mastered the contents of the letter, then flung it down impatiently. "Oh, Coddles, Coddles, my friend! I wish I were like you, and had neither a memory nor a conscience—how jolly it would be! Not that I have much of either, and yet——" he covered his eyes with his hand at that point and fairly groaned, trying to shut out the vision of gold locks and sweetly-smiling sapphire-blue eyes—a vain endeavour.

"Poor darling little Rosy! if only you had been less daintily beautiful, or I more blind!"

It was no use trying to console himself with stale reflections concerning the inconstancy of the feminine character. He very well knew, though the letter bore the signature of "Cuffe," it had in reality emanated from Lord Cuffe's daughter; he had scarcely sufficient self-esteem—and that particular bump in his phrenological chart was pretty largely developed—to imagine that Lord Cuffe, left to himself, would have so much as remembered his existence, far less would he have asked him to his house. No; it was poor, dear, darling, bright, tender Rosy, who, more faithful than himself, had lived all these eight months upon the carefully worded assurances he had made at the expiration of his visit to Ballyshannon. Eight whole months; he had not expected it of her, though he had actually been faithful himself for exactly that period. But now the first week of the ninth month had passed, and Rosy was faithful yet, while he——oh! well, the blue eyes faded away, and a pair of big bold black ones took their place and ended the sentence for him.



He could not possibly go ! He dismissed both the blue and the black eyes from his memory, and reminded himself that he could not possibly go ! Firstly, because he had already accepted as many invitations as his leave would allow ; secondly, because Cuffe was a great distance off, and altogether out of the way of his other engagements ; thirdly —most important reason of all—because he could not afford to ask Lady Rosamonde to marry him. His whole income of seven hundred a year, even if it were perfectly clear, would be but a miserable pittance to ask the daughter of an earl to share. It is true that his somewhat weakly conscience reminded him that Lady Rosamonde had never been accustomed to any greater style than he would be able to give her when his father died, and he, as eldest son, came to reign at Barmby. But then, as he reminded himself and his conscience, with the alacrity which is generally due in such cases to inclination and duty going the same road, his father was only fifty years old, and the Trevors were a long-lived race. He might, and probably would, live to be ninety. Alan wished it might be so from the very bottom of his heart, and though on seven hundred a year a married officer can live very respectably, yet his income was *not* clear ; on the original small estate of seven hundred a year, which had been left to him by his godmother, there were more debts and mortgages than he liked to think about. And besides those, there were more post-obits and life-assurances connected with his heirship of the Barmby property than Mr. Alan Trevor cared to give his mind to at that precise moment.

And besides that, he argued, if seven hundred a year had not sufficed for him as a subaltern and a bachelor, how the deuce would it be possible for him to keep a wife on that sum ? That it ought to have sufficed, Trevor knew well enough—none better, indeed. Seven hundred a year is a good income for a “sub” in a cavalry regiment ; but he, like a young fool, had gone in for tandems and extra hunters, with a fast-trotting cob to save his legs when on duty as orderly-officer, or when going into Carminster. For

a while he had vied very successfully with a brother-officer whose income was some five thousand a year, though his expenditure *never* exceeded two. Then, after a time the tandem and the extra hunters had been put down, and his stud reduced to a couple of chargers, a hunter, and the fast-trotting cob before-mentioned. The cob he couldn't part with; he was wont to declare he would sooner give up his third gee than Jerry—Jerry was so useful a member of society, as society went in the White Dragoons. He had been taught innumerable tricks, of which one was, to kick in the panels of any door Trevor ordered him. It was on record that once Jerry, having grown tired of waiting for his headlong young master, who had left him at the entrance of the officers' quarters, had made his way upstairs, and had, *sans cérémonie*, kicked in the door of the Adjutant's sitting-room, where Trevor was making a call on that gentleman's pretty little wife.

But though he had put down his establishment, his foolish freaks had left behind him a goodly crop of debts which he had at present no means of paying off; nor had he any inclination to further lessen his expenditure.

"It's quite impossible to go now," he mused; "and even if I had no engagements, it would, under the circumstances, be worse than madness to entertain the idea for an instant—ininitely worse than madness. I should be safe to fall over head and ears in love with her again, and heaven only knows what that might lead to; besides, I've promised to go to the Gales. Hallo!" as a bugle-call rang out. "Stables: I'd no idea it was so late. Come, Coddles."

He slipped his belt over his head, caught up his cap, and buckling on his sword, went out with a good deal of jingle and swagger. As he passed the dressing-glass on the tall toilette-table, he caught sight of his blue clouded eyes, and gave a last sigh to the memory of those other eyes that were ever so much bluer than his own, the eyes that would fill with such an agony of disappointment when his reply should go back to Cuffe.

"Poor little woman!" he muttered; and indeed at that moment the jingle and the swagger covered a very sore heart, as jingle and swagger so often do. Then he roused himself with a shake. "Oh, dash it all! I don't suppose she'll care a fig. Ten to one she's forgotten all about me by this time—*ages* since; only Josselyn's being there put old Cuffe in mind of his invitation. Likely enough Rosy had nothing to do with it. Most probably she is fully occupied at this moment making all the eyes she's got at Josselyn, just as she used to do at me last spring: those Irish girls are born coquettes."

So, having come to a conclusion which was good enough to satisfy what he was pleased to call his conscience, he banged his door to with a good deal of unnecessary force, and, closely followed by Coddles, clattered along the corridor and down the stone steps into the square, singing softly to himself as he went:

"Last night there were four Maries,  
This night there'll be but three:  
There was Mary Seaton an' Mary Beaton,  
An' Mary Carmichael an' me."

It was no use thinking about Rosy! He hadn't any money, and she hadn't any money, so he could not have her—and that was the long and the short of it. But was that any reason why he should think of no one else? Alas for the Lady Rosamonde, with the blue, proud eyes, and the gold beauty of her hair! She had passed already into the things that are no more; for him she had become one of the things that have been.

By the time the orderly-officer and Coddles had reached the first block of stables and soldiers' quarters, the blue eyes had given entire place to the black ones—the faint, very faint touch of compunction had left off stinging—the happy, careless light had found its way back to his blue eyes—the good-humoured smile had returned to his lips. Then the black eyes, in their turn, gave place to a newer

interest in the person of Lord William, in much-besplashed pink, who turned in at the gates at that moment, and rode slowly down the square towards the mess.

"Hallo, Bill!" cried Trevor, as he neared him, "you've had a stiff run to-day?"

"Yes! The old mare's squeezed dry, poor old thing!" Bill replied. "I shan't take her out for a fortnight."

"Good meet?" Trevor asked.

"Yes—very fair. The people from Wroxhill were out, and that Miss Gale who's staying there asked after you."

"Ah! Did she look well?"

"Humph—no—I can't say she did. She don't show to advantage on horseback—those heavy women never do."

"Don't care much for horsey women myself," Trevor remarked, adjusting the hang of his sword, and utterly ignoring the fact that Bill Brookes had listened by the hour together to his rhapsodies concerning Lady Rosamonde's equestrian performances. "I don't think the saddle's quite the place for a lady—never did."

"Ah, well, I like a woman who rides straight myself," Bill returned. "Always have a better nerve, and don't go in so largely for headaches and other fads of that kind. Not that I should look twice at Miss Gale, however well she rode. I like a face with more beauty and less brass in it. Well, come up, old girl—don't tread on Coddles, you duffer!"

But Trevor called after him.

"Bill, are you going to your rooms?"

"Yes, but only to change. I've got to look up Crow, who's in hospital with a sprained ankle—slipped into one of those beastly open drains last night, poor chap! and then I promised Josselyn to see to the grey mare."

"Josselyn's grey—why, what's amiss with her?"

"Oh, his fool of a groom let her down the other day—the day you were over at Crowsfield—and broke both her knees badly. I was here in the square with Josselyn when the grey came limping home—the man with his face all

bleeding. Josselyn just took the bridle out of his hand, and said quietly, 'Go over to the hospital and get your face seen to—I'll look to the mare.' I'd expected a devil of a shindy, and so had the groom. They said afterwards the great fool went over to the hospital blubbering."

"And Josselyn never said a word?" Trevor exclaimed. "That was just like Josselyn."

He was right—it was like Josselyn—*very!*

Having watched Bill Brookes and his wearied mare down to the mess, Trevor turned to find himself face to face with the daughter of the Quartermaster, who was evidently returning from the town.

"Good-afternoon, Miss Polly. How d'ye do?" touching his cap with as easy an air of familiarity as if she had been one of the officers. "Cold, ain't it? Got a book there? What is it? 'For Honour.' Rather high-sounding. Is it good?"

"Oh, awfully good, Mr. Trevor! All barrack-life; and the mistakes are splendid!"

"Barrack-life. I'll read it. I'll send Greene down for it at once. Now then, what the devil—— I really beg your pardon, Miss Polly," breaking off his not very flattering salutation to a dragoon who, emerging with a rush from an adjacent stable, had trodden on one of Coddles' little paws, and sent her off howling piteously.

The soldier bolted back into the stable with a very red face, and Miss Polly observed, in commiserating tones, that Coddles really was so tiny one couldn't help treading on her sometimes.

"Never mind, old woman," said the tall young officer tenderly, stooping down and lifting Coddles in his arms. "We'll go down to the mess and find some sugar—sugar, Coddles!" whereat Coddles held out her small damaged paw, with a great deal of fuss and whining, and five minutes later was frisking about as if nothing had happened.

"You're an arch humbug, Coddles," Miss Polly laughed,

"to mind a little touch like that, when we all know the skilful way you can tackle a rat half as big as yourself."

"Ah! but that lumbering brute's great hoof must have hurt her," Trevor maintained.

He could be very tender, this officer of dragoons. Not for anything would he have broken his word to that little dog and deprived her of the sugar he had promised; not the most perfect specimen of her kind that ever took a first prize at the Crystal Palace or any other show could have put that silver-coated lady's nose out of joint.

But then, with him, as with most of us, dog-love was different. We don't grow weary of our dogs; with them, if they have once possessed it, our affection remains; they never pass into the things that have been unless they die, and even then there is never one that *quite* comes up to the especial one who was *the* dog of our hearts, over whose death we shed as bitter tears as for our dearest friend. We don't grow weary of our dogs—of the dogs that we love. It is only of the one whom we have loved with best greatest, purest love that can live in the human breast that we grow weary. "Faithful as a dog." Ah! but it is very seldom that we find so great an extent of faithfulness in the heart of man or woman—perhaps that accounts for it.

Why are men so strange a mixture of tenderness and cruelty? Is that the reason why weak women love them? It was surely strange that Trevor—entering the mess with his heart full of commiseration for Coddles, surfeiting her with sugar, which was bad for her, by way of compensation for what she had already forgotten—should have gone to the desk, and, without an instant's hesitation, have written a reply to Lord Cuffe's letter—words which, in their careless cruelty, would be as a knife plunged into a girl's loving heart. Ah, yes! indeed men love dogs and women differently—at least some men!

## CHAPTER IV.

PERHAPS during the whole of his seven-and-twenty years, Trevor had never been so much in love with anyone as with Lady Rosamonde O'Shaughnassy—certainly never so exclusively in love. When I say that, my reader must not think me too severe. To a nature like his, variety was as needful as a mixed diet is to everyone.

During the time he was in the society of Lady Rosamonde, the nine great Venuses, changed from the pure beauty of marble to the more thrilling loveliness of living breathing women of flesh and blood, might have been seated at the table with him each day, and his eyes would never have wandered from the clear white complexion and proud blue eyes which went to make up the charm that bound him like a spell. For eight whole months he had never found the beauty of any other woman's face thrust the vision of hers away from the pedestal on which he had placed it—the pedestal which, in his own mind, he called the perfection of beauty.

Then came Miss Gale's strong bold face and great black blazing eyes, and straightway the delicate tints of the past love faded before the more glowing colours of the newer fancy. A splendid woman he thought her : such a breadth of shoulder ; such an inward curve to the waist ; such an outward curve to the bust and hips ; such massive statuesque arms ; such very white hands—not, between you and me, small hands, nor particularly well-shapen—hands, indeed, that before he had been a week at Abbot-Royal he decided lacked breeding, for they were thick in the fingers and short as to the nails, with a thick resolute fleshy palm, betraying descent from many and many a generation of hewers of wood and drawers of water.

Now Mr. Alan Trevor, like many another man of long descent, thought more of the personal signs of it than of any actual beauty of face ; such signs had a greater charm

for him than all the wealth of the Indies or all the beauty of Art. So the first thing he discovered, after he had been a few days at Abbot-Royal, was that Miss Gale was not thoroughbred. Perhaps Abbot-Royal itself had something to do with it—the place oppressed him—the money, which met him at every turn, disgusted him. From roof to basement, the house was carpeted with velvet-pile of the deepest crimson hue—he detested velvet-pile! Accustomed to clanking up and down the stone-flagged corridors and steps of a barrack—his own home was great in oak and parquetry—it was a continual annoyance to him to come against some confounded maid-servant every time he ventured into the labyrinth of passages which led from his bed-chamber to the reception-rooms below; not that he objected to the maid-servants, particularly when they were pretty; but those beastly velvet-pile carpets prevented him hearing whether anyone else was likely to come upon them likewise.

Then, after a few days, it worried him inexpressibly to dine daily at a table having gold plate to the value of five thousand pounds. It was not the plate that worried him—he was too well accustomed to plate for that; but what he was not accustomed to was hearing it talked about. How that five thousand pounds did weigh on his mind! for never did he seat himself at that hospitable board without a reminder from his host as to the value of his plate.

After the first evening he never touched dessert—he wouldn't use the knives and forks.

“Beastly vulgar things!” he pronounced them; though in truth they had nothing vulgar about them but their cost—they had cost a lot, for the handles were of carved agate, and the blades were pure gold. If he had heard nothing about their price, Trevor would have said they were lovely.

But so great had his dislike for money become, that one evening he observed in an undertone to a guest of his own class (I did not say, did I, that the Abbot-Royal people were cotton-cords of the wealthiest order?):



"Did you ever hear 'Jerusalem the Golden'?"

"Yes, of course," answered the other, puzzled to know what he meant.

"I hope it won't be anything like this," he growled, in disgusted tones. "I never knew before what it was to have too much of a good thing."

"Rather oppressive, ain't it?" said the other, with a laugh.

At first Trevor had been immensely struck by Miss Gale; then it dawned upon him that she was rather loud. She couldn't ride, and she had big feet—regular beetle-crushers. Her shoulders, if broad, were also thick—in short, she was very much indeed the first of the three generations.

And she sang, too, with a voice like herself, big, loud, metallic—brassy, Lord William would have called it. And it was somewhat uncultivated, for she was not very young, and the Gale wealth was not very old, so that her education was scarcely a match for the gold plate and the velvet-pile carpets. Trevor, listening to her rendering of "*Voi che sapete*" in Anglo-Italian, and with plenty of vigour in the accompaniment, remembered the Lady Rosamonde, with her high-bred air and person, and sighed—Lady Rosamonde, whose instrument was an Amati, upon which she played with a perfection that was the gift of genius.

"Gelo e poi sento,	<i>ff</i>
L' alma avvampar	<i>fff</i>
E in un momento	<i>ffff</i>
Torno a gelar."	<i>ffff fortissimo.</i>

Trevor would have liked to have stuffed his fingers into his ears and groaned; but as such a proceeding was altogether impracticable, he vowed within himself that sooner than endure this torture during his whole life he would go back to his debts and his difficulties, even if they should take him through the unpleasant process of the Bankruptcy Court. "Why, hang it all," he said to himself, "that little grey-eyed housemaid I meet sometimes in our corridor has

more style by half. Oh, I *hate* a woman who sings!" he added aloud to his friend Fane.

"But it's the regular thing. What would you have 'em do?" Fane asked.

"The violin's the only instrument for a woman," Trevor answered testily.

"Ah, my friend, that is it, is it?" Fane said, laughing.

That was so exactly it that Trevor betook himself away from Abbot-Royal without going through the ceremony of asking the heiress of the house to become his wife, though it was the course he had fully intended to follow when he went there. It is very probable that had he done so, Miss Gale would politely and with much tenderness have declined the situation he had to offer. Young ladies who are what in his disgust he disdainfully styled "cotton-heiresses," do not often throw themselves away on penniless subs, even though they are good-looking, and of good family to boot—they marry like the housemaids, to better themselves.

However, Trevor did not give Miss Gale the opportunity of refusing him, but politely, and with many courteous expressions as to the joy and delight his visit had afforded him, shook the dust of Abbot-Royal off his feet, and, as he went to the station in the smartest of dogcarts, dashed himself if he would ever set foot within the doors again. And a very unthankful spirit to betray! We must put it down to the fact that though, while under the glamour of the spell cast by Miss Gale's bold, black eyes, he had been sufficiently prudent to withstand the temptation Lord Cuffe's invitation had been to him, the fascination of Lady Rosamonde's delicate beauty was not yet dead—it had only slumbered awhile—he had suffered temporarily from what he savagely called complete idiocy.

However, as he had so entirely declined Lord Cuffe's invitation he could not change his mind and go to Cuffe Castle now. He had a good mind—a very good mind—to write and say frankly that if they would have him he would

throw over his other engagements. Then the old ground had to be all gone over again ; the debts, the life-assurances, the post-obits and the mortgages, and the seven hundred a year that was *not* clear ; so at last he decided that it was no good, and that he had best keep clear of the folly of matrimony whilst he could.

"If I stay away," this young philosopher said to himself, "I shall not be wanting to make such an ass of myself. No one but Rosy ever suggested the idea of marrying—to my heart. Comé, Alan Trevor, old man—don't be a fool ! Keep clear of this, and you'll be in love with somebody else in a week."

So he was—*pro tem.* ! From Abbot-Royal he went home, remaining at the ancestral mansion a month. Such a thing was unparalleled in the annals of that generation of the Trevor family. Such a thing had not happened since Alan had left Eton. His mother, thinking each day to hear of his departure, wondered what had come to him : knowing him well, poor soul, she began to think his finances were in a worse state even than usual. That Barmby had an attraction strong enough to detain him for a whole month Mrs. Trevor could hardly have believed, even if Alan himself had told her. The household, or rather family, consisted of his father and mother, a young sister—for the three elder daughters were married—a younger brother, and an ancient great-aunt of exceedingly cranky temper and large fortune. Pooh ! the idea was absurd. But the cranky-tempered aunt had a companion—a little soft-eyed, clinging creature, who gave in to Alan's fascinations before he had been in the house four-and-twenty hours—a little body of somewhat lax principles, who was content to be ignored in public, and paid for so doing in gloves and kisses in private ; who was willing to steal out of her room when the house was wrapped in silence, and go down to the smoking-room—the Squire did not smoke, and never entered it—there to listen to and believe Alan's protestations that she was the prettiest little woman in Christendom, by Jove ! and how it was a beastly

shame she should be doing slavey to his cantankerous old aunt; how she ought to be mistress of Barmby, and if he wasn't such a miserably poor beggar, over head and ears in debt and difficulty, why—— And there Mr. Alan Trevor was wont to break off into silence infinitely more eloquent than words, leaving Miss Imogene Brown to finish the assertion up in whatever manner she thought best.

And so, for a month poor Imogene, being scarcely better than an idiot, went about her business, fancying herself far too good for it, dreaming she was the heroine of a romance, such as she had read of scores of times, romances in which the heroine is a young person in the lowest walks of life—as often as not a gamekeeper's daughter—very, very much lower than Imogene—who, going into some great family as a menial, or maybe a governess, immediately subjugates the handsome master, the handsomer uncle, or the handsomest son, and having begun as a stick, ends as a social rocket of the very first magnitude. She saw herself following the drum with Alan, surrounded by a crowd of admiring brother-officers, fêted and petted and generally made much of; then coming back to take her position in the county as Mrs. Trevor of Barmby—for mentally she popped the Squire under the daisies without any compunction.

The winter days slipped by; Mrs. Trevor more puzzled, Imogene more foolish and dreamy, Alan more spoony and more lavish of his assertions than ever. Then, all at once, there was a check—a check so utterly and entirely unlooked for, that it came with the effect of an earthquake, uprooting everything. It came with the post-bag and in the form of a letter—it came at breakfast-time.

“Lawyer's letter for you, Alan,” observed Mr. Trevor shortly; he did not by any means approve of his son's business correspondence.

Alan went on eating grilled kidneys and teasing his young sister, Betty, laying the letter beside his plate with admirable placidity. It happened, however, that his wonderful serenity of temper was not inherited from his father's family, and

the sight of that unopened letter very nearly drove the Squire into a frenzy of irritation.

"Why the deuce don't you open that letter, Alan?" he asked testily.

"I prefer my breakfast hot, sir," returned his son, handing his cup to be replenished.

After a moment's pause the Squire broke out again.

"I don't know how you can sit with that letter unopened," he observed, drumming impatiently on the table with his fingers.

"Open it yourself, sir," suggested Alan easily, pushing the letter to Betty as he spoke.

"Certainly not, Alan. I never opened a letter addressed to anyone else in my life, sir," he announced pompously, yet with such an air of resignation that Alan, with a groan at his father's worrying disposition, tore open the cover.

But, as the contents of the letter became apparent to him, the groan of affectation changed into a very real gasp for breath, and, as was always the case with him under extreme emotion, every drop of blood fled from his face, leaving it of the ashen hue of death.

"Alan, my boy," Mrs. Trevor cried, stretching out her hand to him.

Alan began to laugh shakily.

"Old Soames has left me all his money—eighty thousand pounds," he said, in a husky voice. "I must go up to town at once;" and as he spoke he saw, with a great pang of dismay, the flash of overwhelming joy in the soft grey eyes on the other side of the table. Oh, the seed we sow, that others may reap the harvest thereof!

Within an hour he and Greene were ready to start. Trevor had hoped to get out of the house without encountering the glance of those radiant eyes again; but, when he came out of his room, Imogene was sitting in one of the window-seats of the gallery waiting for him, and flew to him with outstretched arms.

"Oh, I am so glad !" she cried—"so glad ! I was afraid you would go before I could wish you joy."

"Thank you, Imogene dear. Yes, it is a great stroke of luck for me ; it will clear me of all my difficulties," he answered, kissing her and smoothing back her soft brown hair from her forehead.

"And, Mr. Alan, you won't forget me, now that you are rich," she said shyly. "You'll come back to me ?"

"Of course I shall come back."

Then he put her arms from about his neck, kissed her again, and rushed off.

Half an hour later he was in the train, alone with Coddles and his thoughts—free to think now that the way to winning Lady Rosamonde was clear ; his sweet blue-eyed love, whom by his poverty he had been obliged to wound—that was the way he put it to himself. Well, it was all different now ; the road was clear ; no obstacle lay between them—except the girl he had left behind him.

"And oh, by Heaven, what a villain I am !" he cried aloud. Between ourselves, reader, I don't think he was out of it.

## CHAPTER V.

FROM Barmby, Trevor went up to town, there to attend his godfather's funeral ; and from town he wrote to Lord Cuffe, saying that circumstances had altered his engagements, and if they would have him for a week at Cuffe, he should be delighted to visit them.

Lord Cuffe's reply was frank and hearty as himself. "Come as soon as you like, and stay as long as you like. Your friend Josselyn is still here," he wrote.

So Trevor packed up his traps again, and set off on his journey, carrying as light a heart as ever man went wooing with. A good passage across—a few hours in Dublin to buy half a dozen diamond rings, which he had not had time to get in London—then down to Cuffe,

How good it all was ! How different the shabby dogcart, with a raking chestnut flyer, to the glossy and ponderous carriage that had met him at Abbot-Royal, a break big enough to have been a furniture-van ! How good the courteous message, delivered in the rich brogue, that " Me lord was very sorry, but he couldn't come to meet the jintleman, havin' to be on the bench " ! How good the great pile of ivy-covered buildings, half-ruined though they were—how most good of all the greeting of the old butler, who told him my lady was in the great hall with Captain Josselyn ! It was at this point, however, that the measure of his goodness became mixed and suddenly turned to evil, for, as he entered the hall over a worn Turkey carpet, quite as deadening to noise as the obnoxious velvet-pile at Abbot-Royal, he was just in time to see Lady Rosamonde lift her head from Josselyn's shoulder, and Josselyn take his arm from about Lady Rosamonde's waist.

In that one moment—that one glance of comprehension, Mr. Alan Trevor gathered in his harvest, not ten, nor twenty, nor thirty, but a thousand-fold ; in the bitterness of the sweet welcome Lady Rosamonde gave him ; in the bitterness of the sweet smiling eyes that looked so straight into his own, as if wondering that their owner could have seen anything in him to remember for eight whole months ; in the bitterness of hearing the soft rich voice call his friend Charlie ; and in the tenfold bitterness of the moment when that friend held out his hand, saying : " Wish me joy, old fellow, won't you ? " For one instant he was tempted to refuse the hand, the hand of his best friend—to blurt out the truth—to say he was her first love, and she is ; and then Memory and Conscience stepped in and bade him take the hand and admit that he deserved his fate. Memory reminded him of new loves with black eyes, and newer ones with grey. Conscience told him that for him old loves would have been best, and added in no measured terms, that for Lady Rosamonde the case was entirely reversed.

And Love stood by with sad eyes, and listened, while

Conscience told him the bitterest and most unpalatable of truths—"You have only yourself to thank for it."

Poor Trevor! Between Love, and Memory, and Conscience, he had but a sorry time of it. Although he had sown for others to reap, he **was yet** gathering in **his** harvest with a vengeance.



## MONSIEUR LE CHEVALIER.

HIS name was Jérôme St. Etienne, and I need hardly say he was a Frenchman. What he had been in his native country he did not at first tell anyone : but I can tell you that he was well-educated ; that he came over to this country after the affair of '48, clad in a blouse—a blue one—with a stock-in-trade consisting of a tray and an assortment of plaster images and holy-water stoups ; and that he took his stand on one of the bridges of a large English city, which was also a garrison town, expressing himself volubly to everyone who was sufficiently interested in him to listen, that he was a child of the people, that he wore the garb of liberty, and that he had left la belle France to take care of herself, meaning for the present to earn an honest living out of his tray of plaster images and holy-water stoups, though, as was represented to him, it was an occupation alike unsuited to him and to the country of his adoption.

However, for a long time St. Etienne held firmly to his resolution, and was to be seen daily on the bridge in question, with his little trumpery wares exposed for sale. But somehow they did not sell ! The ordinary English men or women of the class likely to buy goods in the street don't care to spend hard earnings in plaster effigies of persons of note of whom they have never heard, or saints whose images they would term "graven." True, one day a woman asked the price of an article she called a *pot* !

St. Etienne took off his cap politely, and replied in his own tongue :

“C’est un bénitier, madame.”

“Hey?” said she blankly (she had thought it might be useful as a receptacle for pins); then, raising her voice, “How much?”

“’Ow môhc?” St. Etienne repeated. It was the only scrap of English he knew. “Foppence happney.”

“Fourpence ha’p’ny? an’ plenty too. Well, I’ll take it,” said the woman, and walked off with her *bénitier*, wondering all day how ever poor French folks manage to conduct the ordinary business of life.

“I suppose they understand one another,” she said, as she hung the stoup on a nail; “but it do seem queer to think of a child prating that lingo.”

“Well, on the whole, business did not thrive well with St. Etienne. Very few people seemed to care about the images, and still fewer thought of utilizing a *bénitier* as a pin-tray. Winter drew nigh, and St. Etienne’s blue blouse got very shabby; his face grew very thin and haggard; his passionate asseverations that he was a child of the people, *vive la liberté, l’égalité, la fraternité*, and all the rest of it, became less frequent; and he began to find that the country of his adoption was indeed a hard one.

There are many animals which may be starved into doing certain things that otherwise they can neither be driven nor led into doing. St. Etienne found himself, from no very great condition of affluence, put upon a bread-and-water diet—not only a bread-and-water diet, but one in which there was a good deal of water to a very small quantity of bread—after a short course of which he became more amenable to reason, and consented to yield to the truth of a suggestion that he might find some better employment for his brains and his fingers than by selling plaster images which nobody wanted to buy.

In short, just at this time the *chef* of the 6th Lancers, then stationed in the town, happened to fall sick, and

eventually died. A few days later, one of the young officers suggested jokingly that, after having had so excellent a French cook, they couldn't possibly do with an English one; and he shouldn't be a bit surprised if that queer chap who stood with a trayful of images on the West-point Bridge wasn't the very man to suit their purpose.

A joke! made and received, as was intended, as a joke; but yet a joke that, spoken in jest, became earnest: for, on inquiry being made of St. Etienne himself, it was found he had been head-cook in the kitchen of a French nobleman, and was a treasure to be valued above measure.

So he resigned the garb of liberty, acknowledging that a coat was infinitely more comfortable. He proved a superb cook; was generous, warm-hearted, and industrious, and very soon floated out of the shallows of poverty into the deeper waters of prosperity; called the regiment his salvation, and, after a while, got married.

His wife, a clever woman, set up a laundry, and took the officers' washing; and so the pair thrived, and St. Etienne lived a comfortable English life, as if such storms as '48—*liberté, égalité, fraternité*—a passion for blue blouses and plaster images, had never once swept across his dramatic, fiery Gaulic soul.

But the excitable, dramatic, fiery spirit was still there; it was dormant, but not dead. We hear that the age of chivalry is past—that it died out with doublet and with silken hose. Stuff and nonsense! When Jérôme St. Etienne had been long enough in Britain to have become a British subject, an incident occurred which—while it raised a great roar of laughter throughout the whole regiment; nay, throughout the town in which the 6th were quartered—gained for him the name of Monsieur le Chevalier, and made hundreds of hearty Englishmen hold out their hearty, honest hands to him—that made hundreds of throats send up as deafening cheers as ever greeted heroes from the field of battle—which won for him the respect of every man who heard the story, the respect that *all* men give to one who

takes up the cause of the little, weakly ones in the mighty battle of life :

“Where the foes are gathered on every hand  
And rest not day or night,  
And the feeble little ones must stand  
In the thickest of the fight.”

\* \* \* \* \*

And now we must leave Jérôme St. Etienne, and I will take you to a large, rather third-rate ladies' school on the outskirts of the town where, at that time, the 6th Lancers were quartered.

I use the term “third-rate” advisedly. It was not a school for the daughters of gentlemen, but of farmers and smaller tradesmen—a school the mistress of which understood not one word of any language save her own. Had it been otherwise, then this story had never been written.

This lady did not profess to teach anything beyond a good plain English education ; and there were many pupils who did not learn French.

But for those who did desire to learn it, Mrs. Morton felt, like a sensible woman, that it was best to have a French governess. She therefore secured a young lady, to whom she paid a trifling salary in addition to her board and lodging and the opportunity of learning English.

It was a good arrangement for the schoolmistress ; nor was it a bad one for the French girl—she had a good roof to cover her, a good bed to sleep on, fair food to eat, and certainly plenty of it. She had a salary which, since she was a Frenchwoman and could make a shilling do the work of half-a-crown (so I am told, yet I find a French bonnet costs just twice as much as an English one—odd that, rather), would clothe her decently ; and a principal who, if she couldn't exchange a word with her, had always a pleasant smile for her and very often a motherly kiss.

On the other hand, this girl had the world—the world—

nothing but the world—a world of strangers. Father, mother, brother or sister she had none. She stood alone :

“ A feeble little one . . .  
In the thickest of the fight.”

Poor feeble one—she was only seventeen—at the best it was but a dull life. She was slow to learn English, and her pupils were infinitely slower to learn French. She had no one with whom to exchange an idea, and the luxury of a “good talk” was one she seemed never likely to enjoy again.

However, three months slipped over, and then the school-mistress paid her her salary—four golden sovereigns. On the first half-holiday she went into the town with the best French-speaking pupil that she might buy a pair of boots, which had been a necessity long enough. It happened that this very girl was going to spend the evening with friends, so when the boots were satisfactorily purchased, Made-moiselle de Rochefontaine escorted her to their house, returning home alone.

While walking leisurely along the semi-rural road, she was startled by hearing herself addressed in her native tongue—her dear native tongue, fluently spoken, and with the purest Parisian accent. She looked up from an absorbing calculation as to how far she would be able to make her four sovereigns go, and found a stranger standing uncovered beside her.

This stranger was tall, elderly, and grey-haired, with that grand air of distinction of which you see so much more across the Channel than you do in this pushing go-ahead country of ours. To Diane de Rochefontaine, after three months—they seemed more like years—spent amongst second or even third-rate people, his manner had the perfect polish of the good society to which she had been accustomed in her youth.

He turned and walked beside her, telling her he had heard of her some days before ; that they were relations, he

being the head of her family, le Duc de Rochefontaine. Then he went on to tell her his history—such a sad one—how he had lost all his property in the affair of '48, which Diane could just remember, and in which her own father had suffered his most severe losses. How he had been exiled by Napoleon, and had come with his wife to this country, teaching, writing, sometimes even begging to keep their respective bodies and souls together. How they had got from bad to worse, so as to be almost homeless, and the wife, the poor delicately-nurtured wife, born of the highest *noblesse* of the *Faubourg*, lay dying of that terrible malady, *cancer*—lay in a poor garret, without a doctor, without food, save of the poorest and coarsest, suffering such agonies, that she had many times implored him, if he had any love or pity for her at all, to kill her and so put her out of her misery.

What a story ! Diane was young, tender of heart, and among a strange people. Monsieur le Duc was her compatriot, nay, her distant kinsman. What wonder was it that, as she listened, the brightness seemed to fade from the sky, perhaps because her eyes were full of tears. She forgot all her wants of dress—and Heaven knows they were many—and out of the shabby little purse, tightly clasped in her hand, she took one of the three remaining hardly-won sovereigns.

“I am not rich, sir,” she said, with her grand air of courtesy ; “but it shall never be said that I am not ready to share my all with a compatriot in distress.”

Monsieur le Duc was overwhelmed—he clasped her hand to his heart—he even went so far as to shed a few tears over it. Diane turned away with corresponding tears in her own sympathetic eyes, and running up to her own little room, wept passionately—partly for the tale of sorrow she had heard, partly for her own utter loneliness and the many trials of the unhappy children of that bright country, to which her yearning eyes would ever look, even as the Mahometan looks and yearns towards Mecca, the holy city

Poor dear little woman ! she thought of the kindly eyes, now closed in death, which would have brightened at her act of charity ; and she felt, with a thrill of triumph, that if they could look from Heaven, not even the joys of Paradise could prevent them feeling pleasure that she, all desolate as she was, had been able, even in her poverty, to alleviate the unhappiness and pains of her two unfortunate kinsfolk.

"They are more desolate than I," she said, looking round the room and thinking of the schoolmistress's good-night kisses.

She wondered if she should ever see him again—that poor, desolate, melancholy gentleman. Poor, innocent child ! she need not have wondered—she saw him many times. The wife grew worse, his tale more harrowing, Diane's tender heart more pitying ; but at last her little store of money came to an end, and she could help no more.

"I must have help," he cried ; "my poor wife lies gasping out her life in agony and torment. I will kill her, and curse Heaven and die ; then, *surely*, we shall be at peace."

Diane, poor innocent, began to weep ; then she bethought herself of a ring which had been her mother's—the only article of value she possessed. She grew sick at the idea of parting with it—her mother's ring ; but only for a moment. Then she drew it off her finger and laid it in his hand.

"Take it," she said gently ; "it is the only thing of value that I possess. I would it were more !"

But that was not the last of him—he met her again, *demanding* money.

"I have none !" said the girl sadly.

"You must find it."

"I cannot," she cried—suddenly a gleam of the truth dawned upon her.

"You will not ?" he hissed, all at once throwing off his mask. "Then I will ruin you—do you understand ?"

The girl stood staring at him in frozen, speechless horror

—the vision of the sick wife faded ; she remembered her hard-earned money—her tender sympathy—her pleasant flush of triumph ; she thought of her ring—the ring which had been her dead mother's ; and then, without one word, she turned back within the gates, ran up to her room, and flinging herself upon her little bed, broke down into the most bitter sobs and tears she had ever shed in her whole life.

Thus a housemaid, sent to summon her to tea, found her, and in a fright fetched the schoolmistress, who simply could not make head or tail of the child's story. After listening to her incoherent statement, and saying "Yes, yes !" at intervals, by way of soothing her, she stood, wondering if it would be best to let her cry her cry out, or send for a doctor. And whilst she was deliberating, a servant entered with a card, and said : "A gentleman, 'm." Mrs. Morton took the card, which bore a coronet, and read aloud—

*"Le Duc de Rochefontaine."*

"What can he want, I wonder ? Can he have anything to do with mam'zelle ?" she mused. "Well, I must go and see what he wants."

Poor little mam'zelle had ceased her sobs, and lay moaning as if in pain, and shuddering piteously. The schoolmistress, feeling very odd and upset herself, left her and went down to the drawing-room.

"I am sorry I cannot speak French, your grace," she said on entering ; she knew an English duke was so addressed.

"I speak English vare well, madame," said *his grace*, with a profound bow. "I have taken myself the liberty of calling ; you have a young *personne* in your house, *called*," strongly emphasizing the word, "*de Rochefontaine*."

"Yes, Mam'zelle de Rochefontaine ! What about her ?"

"I am sorry to say she is an imposterre," answered *his grace* emphatically.



"Oh no ! I had a written recommendation from the wife of the French Ambassador in London," said the schoolmistress stiffly.

"I am aware—that was a forgery. The young *personne* represents herself of my family. She comes from my part of France ; her father is a small shopkeeper in the town of which I am what you call the Squire ; and she speak with a patois so terrible, as to make her quite unfit for the position of *gouvernante*. And she also is *Catholique*."

"No ! No ! Protestant—she goes to church regularly."

"*Catholique !*" Monsieur le Duc persisted quietly.

"And you say she does not speak good French ?" the schoolmistress gasped.

"Patois," with a grand wave of the hand, "or as you would say, the dialect."

The schoolmistress thought of the letter the French girl had brought with her—of the storm of tears she had just witnessed. She looked at the tall well-dressed man, who had a riband in his button-hole, and a grand air, and she believed him.

"Out of my house the hussy goes, this very night !" she cried angrily.

Then Monsieur le Duc de Rochefontaine, having fulfilled his word, departed, and Diane was cast upon the world alone. Literally thrust out upon the world, in the darkness of a chill October evening. I would have you think of it—you, who read my story. Mothers, who have young daughters ; wives, who have brave, loving husbands to guard you from harm ; daughters, who know not what it is to venture beyond the safe shelter of your father's roof—I say, I would have you think of the position this girl, Diane de Rochefontaine, found herself in, when the angry schoolmistress thrust her from her door, without even a hearing. Try to realize it. She was friendless, homeless, and alone, without money, without possessions, save her few poor clothes—without the fair character which had

been hers from her cradle—alone, in a strange land, among a people of whose tongue she knew but a few words.

Can you wonder that her weak lance failed her? Can you wonder that her heart, brave and true as it was, quailed utterly, when foes, the like of which she had never even thought of before, seemed to crowd around her and flaunt their hideousness in her sad face? Heaven only knows what thoughts came into the girl's mind then—thoughts of hunger, cold, death. Can you wonder that, as she sank down beside the lonely road and prayed to God that she might die and be at rest, the thought of a deep, swift river but a hundred yards away came to her with a strange, alluring, soothing sweetness? Poor feeble little one, who found herself indeed

“In the thickest of the fight.”

But it is not always thus that our feeble brothers and sisters are trampled under foot. Even while the girl crouched under the railing almost exhausted by her grief, there came that way another son of France, a real aristocrat this time, though he wielded a cook's ladle, and was commonly known in the 6th Lanciers as “Frenchy,” or sometimes as “Froggie.” He heard the sobs, and stopped short.

“Hal—lo! what is ze mattare? Are you hurt, mees? Can I assist you?”

And then he gathered, not the story, for the girl was too excited to tell it, but the fact that a young countrywoman of his own was in dire distress. It was enough for him; he fetched a cab and took her home to his wife, who petted her and made much of her, until she was able to tell them what had befallen her.

It was then that all the passionate, fiery, dramatic chivalry, so long pent up by English coldness and conventionality, broke out. St. Etienne's original nature seemed to burst forth; his wife hardly knew him. He happened to know all about the so-called Monsieur le Duc de Roche-

fontaine, his family, his pretension to rank, and his lazy, slippery, underhand life. But this, this merciless persecution of a friendless and orphan girl was a new revelation, and it made him almost beside himself; he raved, he stormed, he choked, he gesticulated, nay, he got up and danced about the room in the excess of his passion; he kissed the child and blessed her, and then he danced off again, calling on every saint in the calendar, and out of it, to pour down curses and misfortunes upon the inhuman brute who had done this inhuman thing. Nay, his passion carried him so far, that he forgot the mess-dinner.

"I care not for ze dinner," he raved, when his wife reminded him of it; whereupon that more prosaic person went off into the kitchen and told the second cook something very dreadful had happened to put her husband out, and they would just have to manage the dinner as best they could without him.

And when she went back again, St. Etienne was raving and gobbling still, and finally, having succeeded in sending the over-wrought child into violent hysterics, he seized his hat and danced himself out of the room, muttering and gesticulating as he went, right across the square to the Colonel's quarters.

"Wot's up, mossoo?" questioned a big Lancer, whom he passed on the road.

Receiving no reply, he observed with a good-natured laugh to a comrade that it was a queer little chap, but good-natured, he did believe, down at the bottom of him.

As for St. Etienne, he just danced up to the door of the Colonel's sitting-room, and began such a tattoo on the panel thereof, that the Colonel in a rage dashed across the room and flung open the door, with an angry:

"What the devil do you mean, sir?" then, seeing it was the *chef*, added: "What's the matter?"

But St. Etienne couldn't tell him; he burst into the room positively speechless with rage, and gobbled like a turkey in a passion.

The chief, who was half dressed for mess, stared at him in open-mouthed amazement; to have the mess-cook invading his quarters in this way was something entirely novel.

"What is it? What's the matter?" he asked, concluding something serious had happened.

By degrees the story was told in all its enormity—not told straight-away, but interspersed with interludes in the shape of divers strange-sounding French ejaculations, varied by sundry dances about the room. I am bound to relate that Colonel Vandeleur, in spite of his sympathy with the girl, and his disgust at the story, was so tickled by St. Etienne's transports of rage and the absurd effect he produced, when every now and again he broke off his story to execute a regular war-dance, that he simply sat and roared with laughter till the tears ran down his face and he was speechless. And the more the Colonel laughed, into yet greater transports of rage did St. Etienne go.

"You may laugh, my Colonel," he cried. "When I have flogged him, I too shall laugh. He shall pay. I will thrash him—I will thrash him within von inch of his wretched miserable life. He shall pay—oh, that scoundrel, that bad villain! but he shall pay."

"Now, come, come, St. Etienne," said the Colonel, trying hard to regain his gravity. "It won't do to get yourself into trouble. The law here does not allow that sort of thing; and, of course, we shall make it all right for the poor girl."

"Won't do!" the *chef* screamed, then got up and beat his two clenched fists together in the excess of his fury, and pounded away as if he had the delinquent's head between them. "Won't do! I tell you, my Colonel, it must and it shall do. I will flog. I shall thrash, I tell you, within von inch of his wretched life. Will it cost five pounds? Can I thrash him for five pounds—ten pounds?"

The Colonel began to laugh again.

"I'm sure I don't know. I wouldn't advise you to try."

"I tell you, my Colonel, I must," he reiterated. "If I sat still, and did nothing, I—I—I should burst myself. Oh, he—oh—h—h—h—he shall pay—that villain—if I go to prison—if it cost me ten—twenty pounds—oh, but he shall pay—that—that scoundrel—ugh—gh—eck!" and then he danced off again, sending the Colonel into a more agonizing roar of laughter than ever.

"Now, look here, St. Etienne," were the Colonel's last words, when the *chef* took a frantic adieu—"don't you do anything rash—the brute's not worth it. If you *must* thrash him, go into the town and consult Mr. Scrope. See what it will cost you first."

So to Scrope, the first lawyer in the town, St. Etienne betook himself, demanding to know "'ow môche—'ow big a thrashing he could administer to Monsieur le Duc, otherwise Jean Mattys, for five pounds?"

"Oh, you can very nearly kill him—under the circumstances," the lawyer laughed. "But *I* wouldn't. What's the good of wasting your money?—you'd much better give it to the girl, and I'll give you something to put to it."

He might just as well have told a volcano not to cast up lava, if it were so minded; he might as well have ordered a waterfall to stand still. St. Etienne dashed down half-a-sovereign on the table, which the lawyer told him he didn't want, and danced away again back to barracks, there to tell—in guard-room and troop-room, in sergeants' mess, and, finally, up in one of the young officers' rooms to a select audience—the whole miserable story over and over again, with renewed assurances of "'ow he shall pay."

"You're quite right, St. Etienne; give the brute a regular good hiding," laughed one of the subalterns. "And if they take you up and fine you, I'll pay the fines with pleasure."

Very early the following morning—by nine o'clock, indeed—St. Etienne sallied out, followed by two young

officers on horseback, who had got leave from morning stables for the mere fun of seeing the row. They had not long to wait; for, by good luck, Etienne met his compatriot in one of the principal streets, and, falling upon him forthwith, administered so unmerciful a thrashing that half a dozen stalwart "peelers" could scarcely drag him away from his victim. Bruised, bleeding, and almost senseless, Mattys did indeed present a pitiable appearance; and on the following morning, when St. Etienne, after a night spent in the police-cells, was taken before the magistrates on a charge of aggravated assault, why, the case against him looked a very black one.

However, his lawyer, Scrope, pleading extenuating circumstances, obtained a week's remand. Half a dozen officers, including the Colonel, came forward to go bail for St. Etienne, and he was afterwards escorted back to barracks by an enthusiastic crowd of Lancers, who made as much fuss about him as if he had won the Derby with nothing better than a troop-horse.

A week later the case came on again; the real merits of the affair transpired, and its aspect was considerably changed. Several of the senior officers came forward and spoke to the high character of the prisoner, and the number of years he had been with the regiment. The schoolmistress told her story—Mademoiselle de Rochefontaine told hers. A letter was produced in court from the wife of the French Ambassador at the Court of St. James's, fully corroborating Diane's story. Then St. Etienne's lawyer told *his* story, over which St. Etienne fairly danced again, exulting openly in the fact that he had nearly thrashed Mattys' life out of him.

Probably in no court of justice was so much laughter ever heard before—everyone roared. The Mayor sat in his big chair of office and choked; the lawyers on both sides, the witnesses, the police, and the public, especially the red-coats, laughed till it was absolutely impossible that they could laugh any longer.

Then the Mayor gave sentence ! He said :

"We can perfectly understand your desire to punish this inhuman monster, as you very justly term him ; but the law of this country does not allow a man, however righteous may be his indignation, to take such a matter as this into his own hands. Therefore, we must find a verdict for the plaintiff, and sentence you to be imprisoned until the rising of the Court. As this is the last case for the day, you are at liberty to go now."

"Three cheers for mossoo !" cried a voice below the bar.

"Three cheers for the little lady, bless her !" shouted another.

But St. Etienne wasn't satisfied. He went outside and executed another war-dance, and, catching sight of the impostor stealing away up the courtyard, ceased his dance and fell upon him once more, giving him such a drubbing that he very nearly thrashed him out of this world into the next. In truth, when the bystanders had got the pair apart, they thought he had accomplished that achievement.

They took him up again and fined him a fiver and costs, escorting Mattys out of the city. After which, Jerome St. Etienne cooled down so as to hear the matter discussed without any war-dances or ejaculations, though he was never allowed to forget how he had been carried back to barracks shoulder-height, and somehow they never called him "Frenchy" or "Froggie" any more—his pluck and his chivalry had won every heart in the regiment, whether it beat under lace that was worsted or gold.

As for Mademoiselle de Rochefontaine, the St. Etiennes not having accommodation proper for her, she had been taken in by an officer's wife living near the barracks. She found her misfortunes had brought her friends enough. First, the schoolmistress begged her with tears to return. Diane shook her head, but was so forgiving as to kiss her when she went away. Then Mr. Scrope announced that he had heard of a very good appointment that was open if she

chose to take it. Diane shook her head again. And then the young officer, who had so cheerfully paid St. Etienne's fines, announced that she had already accepted a situation—for life.

And he said, and she said, and everybody else said, that Jérôme St. Etienne had the heart of an angel in heaven.



## *A LITTLE DRESSMAKER.*

SHE was a little dressmaker—a needle-driver ; one of those poor, hard-working, insignificant units of society who spend their days weaving webs for the gratification of others—a poor, little, slender, pale-faced maid, toiling from morning till night over rich silks and costly satins, not having even the varied and interesting branch of the business for her share ; no arranging of tasty trimmings ; no exercise of her ingenuity—oh no ! She made button-holes ; nothing in the world but button-holes. She made them in every class of material, and every shape of garment ; in gowns that were of velvet, and in those that were of cotton ; in gowns that were black, or white, or pink, or blue. Variety of material and of colour she had certainly ; but the button-holes never varied, except that sometimes they were large, and sometimes they were small.

Mrs. Winter tells me—and here I may say that she professes to be rather fond of stitching—that there is no more tedious process included in the whole range of work that may be done with a needle. I throw out a suggestion, and remark that a carpet, particularly if it is an old one that must be made to fit a different room, must be pretty tiresome. Mrs. Winter pooh-poohs the idea instantly. She says women seldom or never make up carpets, and awards the palm of tediousness to button-holes.

I, naturally, not knowing much about the matter, am

dumb. I examine the button-holes of my coat, and try to count the stitches. I get half-way down one side and then I lose count ; so I give it up, and tell Mrs. Winter she is right as usual.

It was, however, from that attempt that I realized the manner of life my little heroine led. If you, my reader, are of the sex which does not make button-holes, try the experiment, and you will be able to imagine the same thing very easily.

In appearance, she was uncommon—distinctly uncommon—in truth, there was nothing common about her. Her person was a very graceful one, even though it possessed that slenderness which was the outcome of poor and scanty food, combined with little or no exercise, and long hours of work in an unhealthy and stooping attitude. Her face was small and pale ; her dark and soft hair was parted neatly in the centre, and put plainly away behind her ears ; she had the biggest dark eyes I ever saw, and moreover, they were eyes that had a wistful, half-startled expression, which added to their bigness, and perhaps added also, more than anything else, to her air of uncommonness—even more than all the rest of her body put together

But, you say, if she had such long hours of work, surely she need not have been poorly fed ! Oh, sir—oh, madam, I can hear the righteous indignation in your wise voices. Pray, what do you think her weekly wage amounted to ? She was well paid on account of her proficiency and dexterity at the button-hole business, or what is called well paid in trade circles—*she had nine shillings a week !* Only think of it ! Just as much as you, sir, give for a bottle of champagne at your mess-table, and think very highly of yourself and your abstemicusness when you do not exceed the bottle ; just as much as you, madam, gave for a single yard of the gown you are wearing this minute, and when you bought it did you not tell yourself it was quite a moderate price ? Well, that was what my heroine earned by a whole week's labour at the making of button-holes. Out of those nine

shillings she lived, found a roof to cover her, raiment to clothe her body, and food wherewith to feed it.

The roof was an attic roof—a very tiny one, too ; the raiment was decent black ; the food, Heaven knows what ! And her name was Susie Harrington.

Well, this hard-working maker of button-holes, poor, brave little soul, sent her needle driving along day by day and week after week, keeping on her independent respectable way, finding her occasional pleasures, and rejoicing in them gladly—pleasures that you, my reader, would deem privations—visiting her few friends—in short, living as hundreds of orphan girls do live in this country.

She was alone in the world as regarded kith and kin, but she was not without friends. Best amongst them was a certain Mrs. Sims, a soldier's widow—a regular old soldier herself, who had been on march half the world over, besides many a long and wearisome journey within the limits of the United Kingdom ; she had seen soldiering under its sternest aspect, for she had been through the Crimean War and the Mutiny also. To Susie Harrington, who had been from childhood of an excitable and romantic nature, her yarns were pleasures unending. Of a truth, Mrs. Sims was a wonderful woman, who went out charring, and could see the truest of true fortunes at the bottom of a tea-cup. Susie believed in her magical power most devoutly, and many a time got her to give her what was called a “throw of the cup,” by way of casting her horoscope.

It was pretty nearly always with the same result, but that Susie did not heed : a bit of trouble—which, upon a second trial, it was found Susie could remove beautifully—a man, a ring, and an unexpected acquisition of money.

“I can't tell how you read it all so plain, Mrs. Sims,” said Susie one night, with a blush. “Wherever did you learn it ?”

“Why, my dear, I learnt it of an old Hindoo woman at Hy-der-er-ha bad, in the Presidency of *Bombay*,” the

soldier's widow answered, "when me an' Sims was out in India."

"Oh! it's in India."

"In the Presidency of *Bombay*," as if that had nothing to do with India at all. "Ah! I shall never forget coming home through the great Desert of Sahary. We disembarked at Suez, and was too days crossing the desert; it was midnight when we got into Alexandria. Never shall I forget it; the heat were awful, and we were that tired and weary; we'd nowhere to go, and did not know where we should find a bed to sleep in. And then the Persia sent for us all to his palace, and gave us all a great supper—I never eat a better. Aye, but he were a kind gentleman, were the Persia of Egypt; he just treated us as if we'd been the highest of gentlefolks."

"You've seen some strange places."

Susie never had to make much conversation when she was calling on Mrs. Sims.

"Yes, my dear; I have that. You see, I was born and bred to it, father having been in the army himself. Yes, he was a soldier too; his last fight were at—— dear me, I forget the name—the big battle where the Duke was."

"The Duke?" said Susie, puzzled.

"Yes, my dear—the great Duke o' Wellingtons; he never lost a battle—different to what they do nowadays. Aye, dear me, how names do slip one's memory! I have it—Waterloo. Yes, that were father's last service. I have his medal yet. Well, you see, I were born and bred to it, so to speak, though father was settled down on his pension before I was born. But then it was in the blood. Why, if I had the chance I'd go roving off again to-morrow—if it weren't for my children, that is. I'd eight brothers all in the army."

"All in the army," echoed Susie.

"All in the army. I'd one in the Cherry Pickers, and one in the 60th Rifles. Poor Ted! he died o' sunstroke in South Africa, in '57. They'd been ten years in the Bush,

Kaffir fighting, and was just on the point of embarking in the *Tamar* for England, when the Indian Mutiny broke out, and they were ordered to get across country from Grahams-town to Fredericksburg, and embark there for India. They'd a march of twenty-five miles the first day—a stiffish bit in a hot climate. They got within sight of a stream just at noon, and ever so many of 'em pulled off their helmets and ran down to the water to bathe their heads. The sun struck 'em, and as for poor Ted, his head were turned right round, so 'at he couldn't see where he was going, and he knocked his brains out against the trunk of a tree. Poor Ted! he were dead in a minute, and two others died whilst the regiment was resting. They left half a dozen behind to bury them, and just mark the spot where they lay, and afterwards they raised a stone. Aye, but that were a bad march—thirteen men and five officers all lost of sunstroke before they got to Fredericksburg—three non-commissioned officers that is, and two commissioned. Then there were two killed in the Crimea. I've one in Australia, and one in the United States; one in the 9th Lancers, and provost-sergeant. I'd ten sisters besides, nearly all married to soldiers. One married a sergeant in the 5th Dragoon Guards—a fine man he was, but he was badly wounded in the throat at Balaklava. Aye, but it was a bad business, the Crimea. I never see the like. There were nine brothers out there at one time, and only three came home again—my sister's husband one of 'em, and fit for nothing afterwards. I remember very well one morning—why, it was the very day Captain Hedley Vickers was killed—never a better gentleman lived; I was there standing by when he died—they was all hard at work in the trenches, and my sister's husband's youngest brother went for to take his turn.

“‘Now then,’ says he, ‘here goes.’

“‘Good-bye; may you come back safe, my lad,’ says I.

“‘Good-bye,’ says he, and over he goes.

“‘Safe—aye, well, it wasn't an hour and a half after.

wards, I see them bring him up under a sheet as dead as a door nail; and such a fine lad he were, and only nineteen!"

"Killed?" cried Susie.

"Oh no! but them trenches made faster work with 'em nor shot an' shell. What the cholera didn't take, the blue gas did;" and then Mrs. Sims, good old soldier, strayed off into the political side of the question, making such statements concerning the Liberal leaders then and now—statements which were the result of her experience of practical soldiering—as to cause Susie, who was a regular little Radical in standing up for the buff, though she did not know the yellow policy from the blue, to feel as if her silky hair was standing straight up on end, like the locks of the famous beauty, Mademoiselle Zobedié Lûti.

Well, it came about through Mrs. Sims and the fascination her soldiering yarns had for Susie, that a great change crept into the girl's life. Mrs. Sims had a son called Ted, named in memory of that other soldier Ted, who had had his head turned round and knocked his brains out against the trunk of a tree in South Africa in '57. This son Ted was of course, in accordance with the Sims family traditions and leanings, a soldier likewise, a flourishing young private of the Grey Dragoons, just home from service in South Africa.

They, the Grey Dragoons, were what good Mrs. Sims called "lying" in Blankhampton Barracks, and naturally Susie saw a good deal of him. But they did not fall in love with each other; I was not leading up to that point, I assure you. But for all that Susie did fall in love; she woke up one fine morning, and found that life was different—life had changed. Love had come into it. Love had brightened and glorified the dingy little attic-room, casting a flood of sunshine over its poor furniture and attempts at decoration, over the poor pictures and cheap plants flowering in the window. Love sat beside her at her meagre breakfast of—never mind what; and Love, the mighty

alchemist, transformed it into a very feast of Dives. Love looked back at her from the small square of mildewed glass, before which she made her modest toilette. Love walked with her through the fresh morning air, and bade her open her mouth wide and draw in great breaths of the sharp cold ozone, for the world, after all, in spite of button-holes and nine shillings a week, is a gay place and worth living in. Love even went so far as to cast his brightness over those everlasting button-holes, and whisper to her consolingly that scrubbing floors would not only be harder, infinitely harder work, but would have ruined utterly the little thin white hands, upon which she could yet feel the kisses Love had left upon them a few hours before.

And Love had done all this most wonderful transformation. Love, the little wanton boy, who aims his dart at peer and peasant, youth and age alike—Love in one of his most favourite masks, six feet in height—Love in a scarlet jacket, with spurs jingling at his heels—Love, with the winning tongue which seems to be the soldier's portion—Love in the guise of a private of Dragoons, with a great hound, over two feet at the shoulder, following at his heels.

There never was such a fine fellow since Adam's day—Adam himself included. If my little needle-driver had been a young lady, with a smattering of a classical education, she would have likened him to a Greek god—say the Apollo; but then she was not a young lady, only a little maker of button-holes, therefore she did not liken Jim Dowere to anything or anyone; only she poured out upon him all her heart's best treasures, and thought him the grandest picture of a man that she had ever seen.

He was a very fine young man, this Jim, no doubt about it. Fair and tall and straight and strong; with white teeth that gleamed out pretty often from under his trim moustache; with a swaggering gait which seemed the very *beau-idéal* of utter carelessness, and was in reality as studied as the polish of his buttons and his spurs; with a gay light-

hearted manner and, as I have said, a winning tongue, which told of Irish sojournings and South African exploits and escapades, with a vividness which did not lose any of its lustre by frequency of repetition—on the contrary; in fact, during the few months that the Grey Dragoons remained in Blankhampton after Jim Dowere took to walking Susie Harrington out, Susie grew so learned on the subject of mealie-fields, laagers, assegais, outposts, skirmishes and the like, that she might almost have been born and bred in the service herself. I think it was partly the rapt attention she gave to his yarns which made him spin them out to such a length—who can blame him? What man on earth would not have added to his traveller's tales, when such a little earnest pale face was uplifted to his, such a wee mouth firm-closed, and such a pair of big dark eyes opening each moment wider and wider, until they seemed at last to swamp the little white face altogether?

"I've put in for leave to be married, Susie," Jim told her one day.

"Have you!" said she, in an almost inaudible voice.

"Yes; you see we may get our route any day now, and as long as we can get leave, there's nothing to wait for."

"No," in the very faintest of whispers. "Very likely, this time next year you'll be in India, Susie," the soldier went on; then drew for her delight, pictures of Indian scenery and life, rather wild as to detail, seeing that they were one and all drawn from South African experiences, but nevertheless quite as fascinating to Susie Harrington's untravelled mind.

He did not think it necessary to tell her, in addition to the information that he had put in for leave to be married, the fact that only six per cent. of our army have that permission granted to them, and that he, for certain regimental reasons, was very unlikely to be of the number. No; the route for Colchester arrived in due course, and Jim Dowere, accompanied by the dog Turk—which by-the-bye did not belong to him, but to the Captain of his troop—elattered



night after night into Blankhampton town, and met his little black-eyed sweetheart under the lime-tree which grew just outside the passage up which she lived. But nothing further was said about the asked-for leave, and in time the Grey Dragoons marched out of Blankhampton Barracks, with all the excitement and glory of a military farewell.

Susie had stolen a day from her button-holes that she might see the very last of her Apollo; and Jim bent down from his saddle to repeat the cheery words of their farewell tune:

“My love, I will come back again  
To the girl I leave behind me.”

“I shall get my leave as soon as the inspection’s over,” were his last words, “and then you’ll see me back again, Susie, and we won’t never be parted no more.”

“Never no more,” repeated Susie solemnly.

“And you’ll be true to me, Susie; you won’t be going with no other chap—you’ll be quite true?” he asked anxiously, as anxiously as men always do ask about the truth and constancy of other people.

“I’ll be true,” she said; then, trying hard to shake off the emotion which was fast creeping in a great knot up her throat, she asked abruptly, “Why, where’s Turk, Jim?”

“Oh, he’s hurt his foot a bit. The Capt’n thought he couldn’t do the march, so he’s coming with the dismounted party.”

“Next week?” she asked, feigning an interest she did not feel.

“Yes, next week.”

Then she fell back, not being able to keep up with the horses any longer. She turned and stood to watch him out of sight, her great eyes swimming with tears.

Suddenly the band changed its tune, and the cheering strains of “The girl I leave behind me” gave place to the pathetic air of “You’ll remember me.”

"When coldness or deceit shall slight  
The beauty now they prize,  
And deem it but a faded light  
Which beams within your eyes.  
When hollow hearts shall wear a mask,  
'Twill break your own to see,  
In such a moment I but ask  
That you'll remember me."

Not very exalted poetry, yet the words—Susie knew them, and the band seemed to really speak them as plainly as a voice—sank deep into her troubled heart. Jim turned in his saddle for the last time, as if silently impressing them upon her. The tears gathered in her eyes, overflowed, and she turned herself back to the dingy little attic which she called home, as sorrowful and desolate a little woman as the world held that day.

A week went by. She had on the fourth day a hurried but long letter from Jim, dated from a little country town on the third day of march—a letter that cheered her up, and made her feel brave and at peace again. They had had a pleasant march so far; only one mishap, that of a horse which had got loose in its stable, and had so smashed itself that it had to be shot. Poor beast, it had had to lie eight hours in agonies, whilst the officer in command telegraphed to the authorities for permission to destroy it. It made Susie's tender heart ache to read it; but then, you see, she was not a military authority, or she would have known better than to possess a heart to ache at *anything*. I have known a cavalry charger suffering from frightful burns remain *three days* before the wise-headed authorities gave permission that it should be put out of its misery, even though the "Vet" in attendance had declared from the very first that nothing else could be done for it.

I dare say the gentle and witty critic of the *Pall Mall Gazette* will, if he happen to review this sketch, again bring forth an exceedingly antiquated joke about the Horse Marines. Believe it or not, it is a positive fact the date of which is not half a dozen years from the present day.

Well, the letter contained other interesting details : how the farrier-sergeant accompanying Captain Brudenell had, on the second day, coolly gone to bed as soon as they got into their billet, with a bad headache ; how the Captain had stormed a bit at first, but had bade them let him sleep himself well again. How Bill Foster had remarked as the Captain went off, "Lor' ! fancy his black face atween two white sheets !" even the Captain had not been able to help laughing. How, on the same night, Sergeant Haussmann had got roaring drunk, and had hit a civilian over the face with his whip without any provocation whatever ; how the Captain had put him under arrest, and had given it him proper into the bargain ; how he was safe to be broke for it, and would have but a small chance of ever winning his sergeant's stripes back again.

After the receipt of this letter, Susie felt herself again. All the military information delighted her, and she smiled over her button-holes, looking as blithe and bonny as a bird. Perhaps she smiled most brightly of all over the last piece of information the letter contained—that the incoming regiment, the Cherry-pickers, were a queer, wild lot, and she was to be very careful to have nothing to do with any of them.

Sweetest clause ! Anything to do with them indeed ! as if she, busy with her button-holes all day, and possessing a Jim Dowre of her very own, wanted to have anything to do with any Cherry-pickers ! She had carefully scrutinized one or two, who had turned up in charge of some hunters, with eyes of utter disfavour, mentally finding fault with their uniform ; she voted the crimson overalls as hideous as ridiculous—their air, their gait, looks, everything. She felt the Cherry-pickers were all her enemies, for were they not the supplanters of her beloved Grey Dragoons, who, for Jim's dear sake, she glorified into the smartest regiment in the service, not knowing, poor innocent, that *all* cavalry regiments boast of possessing that proud distinction !

Ten days after the departure of headquarters, the dis-

mounted party gave over the barracks into the hands of the dismounted party of the incoming regiment, and turned their backs upon the city of Blankhampton ; it was several days after this that Susie Harrington, taking a stroll through the soft summer evening, came upon the dog Turk.

"Why, Turk, old fellow !" she exclaimed, "they've never left you behind !"

"Oh, but they 'ave, miss," volunteered a smart young Cherry-picker, who had once or twice already cast envious glances on the girl's big eyes and neat little feet. "The orficer in charge said he wouldn't 'ave no dorgs with 'im. And one or two of the men said as 'ow it were the Captain's orders (the orficer what belongs the dorg I should say) that the dorg went with the dismounted party. However, the orficer 'ad 'is way o' course, so the dorg were left—a nasty savage brute he is. If I were you, miss, I wouldn't be so keen of touching him."

"Turk—savage !" Susie repeated, incredulously. "Do you think he has had anything to eat ?" she asked timidly.

"Well, I don't think he 'ave, miss. You see Capt'n Clarke, as is in command, won't 'ave him in the barracks at all ; so I don't think the dorg has fared so very well. I did 'ear Capt'n Clarke say this morning as 'ow he would 'ave him shot."

"Shot !" cried Susie blankly. "Indeed he shall not be shot. I shall take him home with me."

"Well, miss, there ain't no one to prevent it ; but he's a savage surly brute, best kept at a distance, not fit for a young lady to 'ave about her. We tried ever so long this morning to get at 'is collar to see the name on it, but he wouldn't let us come nigh hand of 'im."

"Turk, come here," said Susie, in her kind and gentle voice.

The dog obeyed, and thrust his dejected nose into her hand. She bent down and twisted his collar round, so that the inscription upon it was plainly visible.

"I belong to Captain Brudenell, Grey Dragoons. Whose dog are you?"

"Good old fellow!" she said, patting his head. "I'll take him away with me. I have no doubt he'll be sent for as soon as the Captain finds out they have left him."

The dog having once more licked her hand, had gone into the middle of the road and lain down there, looking with his deep-sunken eyes wistfully into the barrack-square, which until then had been his home. Poor beast! it was hard for him to understand that though the barrack was there still, the rough and kindly voices which had greeted him with many a caressing word were there no longer; that the doors of the troop-rooms, which until then had always opened at the heavy thump of his tail, the scratch of his big paw or the deep "wough, wough" of his voice, were closed to him for ever. You have felt yourself in just that position, reader, have you not? Then you can not only sympathize with Turk, who was thus suddenly cast upon a world which was neither kind nor tender to him, but you can perhaps understand also something of the wistful amazement which must have filled his faithful dog's heart. Susie Harrington understood it to a nicety; poor little woman, it was perhaps something of a fellow-feeling which made her so wondrous kind to a friendless dog.

As she stood there, hearing without heeding the young trooper's awkward and florid compliments, a small car, drawn by a skewbald cob-pony, and containing two officers in plain clothes, approached from the town: the dog was lying directly in their path.

For a moment Susie thought the driver meant to run over him; but though he did turn the skewbald slightly on one side, he could not yet pass the poor desolate animal in peace, but caught him a smart cut with his whip as he lay on the ground. Turk gave a dismal howl, and the two soldiers laughed, turning more than admiring glances on Susie's dark eyes as they passed her.

Susie rushed right into the middle of the road, her eyes

blazing, her face pale no longer, but streaked with an angry scarlet flush.

"You—you—you brute!" she cried, clenching her little thin white hand into a fist. "You—you—you *coward*!" and then she burst out crying over Turk's great cowering body.

From that hour the Blankhampton Barracks knew Turk no more; he went home with Susie Harrington to the dingy little attic up Barker's Passage, and became her dear companion and friend. Dear in more senses than one; for first she had to take out a license, lest the police should be down upon her, and prove even harder of heart towards Turk than the Cherry-pickers had been. She had to go on short commons that week, for Turk had to be fed, and the seven-and-sixpence for the license had been a good slice to take out of a weekly wage of nine shillings. But Susie did not mind; it cost her, it is true, many a sacrifice to have the keep of a huge hound thrust upon her, but she made the sacrifices cheerfully; certainly she gave Turk enough to eat, even if at times she went on scanty fare herself. It was not any fault of the poor dumb beast that he had been left behind, and the girl was too just and generous to let him suffer. It is true, also, that in those days of loneliness he was a comfort to her—a very great comfort. He was something to care for, something to think about: she took him for a run every morning before she went to her button-holes, and again when she had done with them for the day; for the rest, he remained waiting for her within the precincts of Barker's Passage. People wondered that he did so, that he never ventured outside into the street and strayed away as other dogs will do, but Turk never did. It may be that he had a wholesome horror of crimson overalls, and preferred to remain in what he knew was safety; I cannot say. Who shall tell the workings of a dog's mind? I only know that Turk, who had never been of a buoyant nature, though to those whom he knew well always intensely affectionate, became the most patiently miserable and mournfully de-

jected of dogs. Sometimes Susie used to wonder what he could be thinking of. That the dog *was* thinking, she never doubted for an instant. At the sound of a strange footstep he would raise his great head, prick up his heavy ears, and thump his tail upon the floor in joyful expectation; but no! the master he waited for did not come, the step was not his—down would drop the head upon his paws, the expectant ears droop, the tail fall to the floor in a final thump, which meant disappointment, if ever a dog's tail meant it in this world.

Then Susie, who knew all that was troubling him, would pet and make much of him, and try to make him understand the truth—that Captain Brudenell was away from his regiment ill, having had the misfortune to break his leg on the march, and believed Turk was safe and sound in Colchester Barracks.

"He'll send for you, Turk, old boy," she cried one night. "Jim'll tell him, as soon as he rejoins; and till then, you must just put up with Susie, who loves you dearly, because you belong to her own Grey Dragoons."

But Turk did not understand; he knew that Susie loved him, and in his turn he loved her dearly. But Susie was not Captain Brudenell, and Susie was not Jim Dowcre. For all his five years of life, he had been the constant and daily companion of those two—of the officer in the daytime, of the trooper during the evening. He had been out to South Africa, and present at Ulundi; he had known many changes, suffered many fatigues, but he had never known the change of a master; and with all his fatigues, he had never before endured that of living in an attic up Barker's Passage.

Again Susie had heard from Jim—the letter in which he told her of the accident to his Captain. He asked her to keep the dog until he should be sent for.

Then there came a long silence. Twice the girl wrote, but there was no reply—she did not write again—even if she was only a poor little woman, who made nothing but

button-holes, she was very proud. Besides, she had very little time ; the poor do not scrawl off letters by the dozen as we do, and perhaps they do not look for them as eagerly. Anyway, she did not write again.

So the summer slipped by. Then, at the beginning of September, there did come a letter, a mere scrawl ; they had been "orfully" hard-worked, but the inspection was over and he had been made a corporal. As for the dog, he had told Captain Brudenell, who had been very angry indeed, declaring he had been left behind simply to annoy him ; he was very much obliged (Captain Brudenell, that is) to her for taking care of him, and as he would be in Blankhampton in the course of a few weeks, he would fetch him away himself.

*There was not a word of Jim's own return !*

Not that the girl noticed it—she was far too happy to read between the lines and see that he did not mean to come at all. She was so happy. She even went the length of reading the letter to Turk, who licked her hand, and made a feeble, lifeless, spiritless kind of flop to reach her face.

"They are coming back, my honey," she told him gaily. "And then you and I'll be as happy as we've never been in all our lives before," at which Turk banged his tail upon the floor ; there was no doubt Turk loved her very dearly, if not quite the most dearly of the whole world.

"Give me a throw of the cup, Mrs. Sims," she said that evening, breaking in upon the soldier's widow, followed by the big hound.

It was much the same as usual : a tall fair man, serving under the crown—a journey between them—a letter—a ring—a surprise, and so on. If Mrs. Sims foresaw anything more, she kept her foresight to herself. And then she got to talking of her Crimean experiences again, and her political views ; Susie's hair had long since given up standing on end for political causes.

"I'm a plain woman of no education," Mrs. Sims



asserted; "but I haven't forgot how men died in the trenches like sheep, and in the hospitals worse than sheep in a slaughter-house, while them at home was talking of the glory. Aye, my bairn, you'd better have chosen anything but a soldier lad; it's but a poor and a hard lot, and remember you wasn't born and bred to it like me."

Ah! but Susie was in love—Mrs. Sims had forgotten that.

It might be that she had had a hint of what was coming, from her boy Ted, which made the soldier's widow all at once take such a warning tone to Susie; it may be that she really did see something at the bottom of a tea-cup. Anyway, one Saturday evening at the end of the month, September, she knocked at her window as Susie passed from her work. Susie went in.

"Susie Harrington," said the soldier's widow sorrowfully, "I've news for you. I've had a letter from our Ted."

"From your Ted!" said Susie, turning very white.

"Never you heed, my girl," the other went on, in tones of stern comfort. "I've seen it coming, though I hadn't the heart for to mention it, lest I might be wrong. He's a bad scoundrel as ever drew breath: I wish I'd never set eyes on him, let alone ha' got you to be sweethearts."

"What is it?" Susie panted.

"He's married another woman, my girl," said the widow pitifully. "It's a way soldiers have, 'specially when there's money in the case. Our Ted says she's a fond brazant thing, but she'd fifty pounds that her master left her for a legacy. It's the fifty pounds, my girl, he's left you for, not for her," with a rough attempt at consolation.

"I'll go home," said Susie quietly; "I'll go home, Mrs. Sims; good-night."

Yes, she would go home to her lonely attic and to Turk: there she would find solitude, quietness, and peace.

Poor dear little sewer of button-holes; she went through the narrow dingy streets like a woman in a dream. Jim

had married another woman for fifty pounds—that was the burden of her thoughts—for fifty pounds.

“We won’t never be parted no more,” the words rang in her ears still—the words he had spoken so earnestly when he left her. Poor innocent little darling! so many men say them, and so many women believe them—she was but one of a multitude.

She passed under the lime-tree and turned down the narrow passage leading to her home.

“Susie Harrington,” said a voice from the kitchen of the house.

“Yes, Mrs. Smith,” she answered, wearily. “What is it?”

“There’s been a gentleman here for you.”

“A gentleman for me!” her heart gave a great leap of joy.

“Yes, a real gentleman—no end of a swell,” the landlady answered. “He came for the dog.”

“*The—dog*,” the words seemed to come from somewhere a long way off, not from Susie Harrington at all.

“Aye, he left this note for you. He were sorry not to see yer. If he’s time he’ll come to-morrer, but doubts he won’t. Aye, but the dog were main glad to see him! he fair howled again.”

“And he has gone?”

“Gone? Aye, sure enough. Glad you must be to be rid on him—a great beast like that to keep.”

But Susie was gone. Alone in her attic she opened the letter: it contained two five-pound notes and the following written on a sheet of crested paper:

“Captain Brudenell wishes to thank Miss S. Harrington for her kindness in taking care of his dog. He hopes she will accept the enclosed as a small return for all her trouble.”

A small return, when he had taken away the only thing she had to love. Oh, the mockery those two flimsy bits of paper seemed to her! Jim had married another woman

for fifty pounds, and Turk had utterly forgotten her at the sight of his own master !

I think almost she felt the one desertion as keenly as the other, for she sank down on her little bed, hiding her face upon her hands, with one word thrice repeated on her lips :

“ Turk ! Turk ! Turk ! ”

## LOO.

### EPISODE I.

MY name is Tankerville\*—James Enoch Tankerville, Lieutenant Tankerville, 1st South West Royal Chalkshire Rifle Volunteers, at your service.

I am a widower. Indeed I may say I am a double-distilled widower, for poor Carrie was the second devoted wife whose loss I mourned—at least, Carrie was very devoted, I don't know whether I can say as much for Rosa. But never mind Rosa—Rosa was, so to speak, a Tartar, and it was a real stroke of ill-luck that I happened to catch her. Without doubt Carrie was all that could be desired. Submissive—she never said “no” to anything *I* said; economical—I never bought her a frock all the years we were married; clever—she played and sang splendidly, and spoke French like a native; and what was more, she was always at all times a perfect lady. Ah! well, well! I only trust Loo may prove as entirely satisfactory when, my term of mourning having expired, I lead her to the Hymeneal altar to become Mrs. James Enoch Tankerville, in lieu of being simply Miss Talbot.

Apropos of names and titles, I do wish Loo were a trifle less flippant; I dislike flippancy extremely, especially in a woman, more especially in a young woman. Now, it was only as

\* We wish it to be distinctly understood that we are not responsible for J. E. T.'s French, his grammar, or his pomposity.—ED.

far back as yesterday that I just hinted—in the most delicate manner imaginable, of course, for it is but four months since I became a widower for the second time—well, I just hinted that *Mrs. Tankerville* would be a vast improvement on *Miss Talbot*, when Loo called out, in her particularly aggravating straightforward way : “ Oh !

“ Change the name and not the letter,  
Change for the worse and not the better.”

I felt, somehow, as if I had had a cold shock. It is very ridiculous of Loo to be for ever pretending she does not care whether she makes the most of her chances of entering into the bonds of holy matrimony or no—as if *all* women do not prefer double to single harness. I know what it all means. There is a bygone romance in Loo’s life—a big dragoon—a regiment ordered to India—a parting, and what is romantically called “ a broken heart.” I know all about it. I am *like to*, as the Chalkshire people say ; for Loo, as it were, thrusts the old love-affair down my throat on every conceivable occasion and in every imaginable way : she does it with an air of defiance, which renders mistake impossible. For instance, not many days ago, in speaking of a little family disagreement of my own, which also included her, I said :

“ Ah, well ! never mind, Loo ; don’t take any notice.”

Said Loo, with a wistful look in her great eyes, and I’ll swear what was half a sob rising in her throat :

“ I don’t like making gaps.”

Said I, airily : “ Oh, fill your gaps up again ;” and I must confess I was thinking more of the big dragoon than I was of my own people.

Loo turned upon me almost savagely with what looked like tears in her big eyes, and what sounded like tears in her voice.

“ You may fill your gaps up again, Mr. Tankerville,” she said passionately, “ but I shall *never* fill mine ”—and I think

she added, "*with you*," only it seems too absurd on the face of it.

And yet it was only last week, by way of ignoring the very considerable difference in our ages—she is three-and-twenty, I on the wrong side of fifty—that I chanced to observe, quite casually, of course, that I thought she looked more than her age.

"I've had such troubles," she answered, quite gravely for her. "And, faith, they do take the shine out of one."

"Oh!" I said, smiling. I wanted to put aside that old romance, so spoke lightly. "You carry your troubles well; you seem to forget them very comfortably."

Loo opened her eyes. She has a somewhat objectionable manner of suddenly raising her eyelids.

"There are *some* troubles, Mr. Tankerville, that I have no desire to forget."

She spoke in a tone of dignified significance, and I knew she was thinking of that fellow in India! What she could ever see in him *to admire*, I cannot imagine. A great, coarse, hulking brute, six feet high, with nothing of the slender elegance for which I am remarkable—a man with a hand like a leg of mutton, as ready to knock you down as look at you. But Loo seems to admire that gross type. Now, for my part, I consider that beauty consists, not in immensity of size, but in exquisite proportion. All the Tankervilles are elegant—markedly so! My sister, Mrs. Pergolesi Stubbins, is a very elegant woman—not a large woman by any means. None of the Tankervilles are large; but slim, graceful, slender, with a fine fall in the shoulders—though I must confess it, a total absence of those fine curves for which Loo is distinguished.

Loo is a fine young woman—not handsome. Indeed, the most noticeable part of her face are two big brown eyes, with black eyelashes and eyebrows, the latter well defined. But Loo is tall, slightly taller, in truth, than myself; and Loo has a figure which is small in the waist and full in the bust; in short, what our Gaulic neighbours

describe as *swelte*. No, that can't be right ; there isn't a *w* in French ; I'll look it out. Ah, yes ! *swelte*, and that is what describes Loo precisely.

As I said, slender elegance seems to have no charms for her ; if a long-legged, square-shouldered, swaggering dragoon—a common soldier, I mean, not an officer—passes us in the High Street, or in the Winter Garden, Loo puts her head on one side, and cries in her absurdly impulsive way, “Oh ! *isn't* he a fine fellow !” For my part, I must say I am of the old-fashioned way of thinking, which decreed that a lady should be absolutely unaware of the person of any man until he has paid her some attentions ; while of the physique of a man of the social status of a common soldier, she should remain once and for all in utter ignorance. But Loo is of the new school, and I am afraid she has had a lax bringing up, as I had ample opportunity of perceiving the other day, when I spoke in favour of the old-fashioned ideas.

“Handsome fellow !” she exclaimed, following a fair-haired, long-legged officer with her big eyes. “Just the type of man I most admire. Oh ! I *beg* your pardon, Mr. Tankerville, *what* did you say ?”

I did not condescend to repeat it. I said it was not worth it. Loo said coolly she dared say not. I believe she tries how far my self-command will carry me, when she makes those daring little speeches of hers ; or perhaps the little puss is only trying to force my hand, for the man in question was as utterly unlike me as one human being can be like another. Ah, well, well ! I will fall in with her humour—it will only be for a time ; I must make a merit of stooping to conquer—little matters of that kind may all stand over until, my term of mourning having expired, Loo becomes mine.

I am sorry to say, though, that Loo has various ideas which I must by-and-by endeavour to eradicate. For instance, I happened to express an opinion the other day that a man should have complete control, not merely over

his wife's actions, but also over her ideas. Loo's views are different.

"Why should a woman be any man's slave?" she cried. "I can tell you, if any man ever tries to reduce *me*"—and Loo has a particularly disagreeable way of emphasizing her remarks—"to subjection, I shall simply throw something at his *head*."

Imagine Loo throwing something or anything at me! Entre nous, I can imagine nothing more readily—in her present rebellious state, that is. But I must be firm. I must begin as I mean to go on, for if there is one point more than another upon which I am inflexible, it is that I shall be the master, most emphatically the master, of my own house.

"Pooh!" Loo cried, when I expressed myself somewhat warmly on the subject of a mutual friend who is thoroughly henpecked, "only mean men and noodles trouble themselves to be anything of the kind. Now I'll tell you, Mr. Tankerville, what is my beau-ideal of a man and a husband. A man and a husband, Mr. Tankerville, whether he be a nobleman or a cottar, may reasonably expect that he shall have a good dinner every day—good, that is, according to his position in life. If his dinner is not forthcoming, that man may make a row—I don't mean just a growl in a mild kind of way, but a regular shindy. Otherwise a man has nothing to do with his household whatever, except in providing his wife with so much money each week or each month or quarter, as the case may be: with the ins and outs of housekeeping, a man has no business to have even an acquaintance, to say nothing of a real intimacy."

All very well, but that won't do for *me*; I must and will be the master of my own house.

"Only a mean-spirited creature, who is nobody *out* of his house," says Loo, "would give a fig to be anyone *in* it."

Does Loo mean to imply, I wonder, that *I* am a mean-spirited creature?



"Now, when *I* get married," Loo remarked yesterday, "I'll tell you what I mean to do, Mr. Tankerville—I mean to be master and mistress both."

"When you get married," I returned, with a quiet smile, "you will do as all other ladies do."

"Shall I? Ah! I don't think so," she retorted. "I don't think, though, that I ever shall marry. Marry! why should I? To have the unspeakable honour of being called 'Mrs.' instead of 'Miss.' After all, what is it that we women gain by marriage? Don't you know that a great man once said, 'There is no slavery like that of a white slave who wears a wedding-ring?' He was quite right. We lose our liberty, our individuality; we become slaves, mere slaves. Why, look at me now. I go out when I like; I go in when I like. I go where I like and how I like. I spend what I like; I've no one to grumble at my dress-maker's bill or any other bills. My mother"—Loo has a stand-offish way of saying "*me möth-aw*," which is very objectionable—"never interferes with me, nor I with her. Sometimes they send in the bills to me, sometimes to her; sometimes they give us one between us. I should take badly to having to keep a *man* in good temper all day long; and, after all, what should I gain?"

"Do you think nothing of—love?" I asked.

Loo's big eyes softened. "Ah, yes! if I could gain—love."

I saw an opportunity for improving the occasion. A word in season, how good it is!

"My dear late wife," I said in quavering accents, "was, I believe, perfectly happy. Why she was taken away from me I could not at first imagine. She lived in what to her was a terrestrial paradise: she often said so. Perhaps we were too happy in each other's love; I cannot say," and here I sighed. "Yet, with her birds and her dogs, her flowers and her—her husband, she was truly content. I do assure you we had but one heart, one soul, one mind——"

"*Your* mind, I suppose?" Loo put in.

I felt startled. I admit it. "We never," I said with dignity, "we never had a disagreement."

"Oh! hadn't you? Dear me, how gossip does gather about people! Now, I always understood you fought like cat and dog," remarked Loo, with a flippancy which I must say astonished me. "Well, Mr. Tankerville, all I can say is, that when I—if I ever am so foolish as to marry, I shall take care to choose a man big enough to break my neck with one twist of his finger and thumb; he'll be above any master—of—his own—house rubbish, and will let me have a mind and a soul and a heart, and all that, to myself;" at which Mrs. Talbot had the bad taste to laugh outright.

I am beginning to think that Loo's terrible straightforwardness very frequently leads her into vulgarity, and instead of repressing it, Mrs. Talbot only encourages her in it. I don't like Mrs. Talbot, somehow; she is one of your hatefully cool clever women. However, when Loo becomes the mistress of Ullathorne House, I shall take care to keep her mother at a respectful distance. A mother-in-law with a persistent habit of placing herself exactly on a level with one—as regards age, that is; I must do Mrs. Talbot the justice to say that she never classes herself with me in other respects—and speaking of Loo as if she is a child of ten years old, would scarcely be an agreeable visitor. Besides, she invariably makes Loo laugh: "Why, I'm *three*—and twenty," as if that was the age of Methuselah!

## EPISODE II.

THEY are going away! I saw them in the Winter Garden this evening, and *Loo let it slip*.

I couldn't shut my eyes to that, for Mrs. Talbot frowned at Loo, and Loo said, "Oh, I forgot," and turned her attention resolutely to the Dragoon band which occupied the orchestra at that moment. They were playing "The Blue Danube. I touched Loo's arm.

"Do you remember our ball?" I asked, referring to a grand ball given by the officers of the 1st South-west Royal Chalkshire Rifle Volunteers, two years previously.

"I should think I do," Loo answered, beating time to the music. "It was the happiest—at least one of the happiest evenings of my life."

"Do you remember the waltz?"

"'The Blue Danube?' Oh yes! I danced it with Dicky Treherne—always kept 'The Blue Danube' for Dicky—such a pleasant step he had!"

Loo danced it with *me*! I remember it distinctly.

"Don't you remember dancing with *me*?" I asked.

"Oh yes! rather. You dance *deux-temps*."

Written down, the words look nothing. I do dance *deux-temps*—but spoken as Loo spoke them, they conveyed an idea of disparaging contempt which made me boil. But it was not convenient that I should show displeasure. I therefore changed the conversation abruptly.

"And so you are going to Bruxelles," I remarked as pleasantly as I could.

"Oh no!" Loo replied.

"You certainly said so," I told her decidedly.

"I beg your pardon," she answered, with a laugh. "I told you we were going to Brussels."

"And when are you going?" I thought it wisest to ignore the remark, annoying as it was.

"Monday."

"And how long are you intending to remain?"

"As long as our money lasts," she returned, coolly.

I could not very well ask how much money they meant to take with them, so I passed over that remark likewise.

"And what hotels do you go to?"

"Lodgings," said Loo tersely, and without turning her head.

"Oh, you'd much better go to a *pension*," I suggested.

"I should think we had better please ourselves," she replied, absently.

"And when do you *think* you'll be back?"

"Oh, for Christmas, certain."

"Christ—mas, and it is now July! You will let me write to you?"

"Write to me, Mr. Tankerville!" Loo exclaimed, opening her eyes as if she never meant to shut them any more.

"And what do you want to write to me about?"

"What about?—why, just to let you know how things are going on. How everyone is."

"My dear Mr. Tankerville, I don't want to know," she cried. "I dislike Garthhampton so thoroughly that, if I could help it, I would never set foot in the place again. Unfortunately, Mrs. Talbot will be obliged to return."

"Why do you dislike it?" I asked.

"Why?" with a great sigh. "Oh, I've been unhappy and miserable here, and I never feel quite well. I always have a sense of suffocation just here," laying her hand for an instant on her heart. "I hate Garthhampton;" and she said it as if she meant it.

"My dear," put in Mrs. Talbot quietly, "would you not like to go? The Scottish Fantasia comes next."

"Oh yes, mother darling, please," Loo exclaimed, rising from her chair with alacrity. "Let us get out before it begins. I can't bear it," she said, turning to me.

"Why?" I asked curiously; but Loo did not reply—in fact, as we left the building, I felt obliged to offer my arm to her mother, who is a little lame.

"Pray take my arm, Mrs. Talbot," I said, as genially as I could.

"Oh, thank you," she returned frigidly, "but I *have* my stick."

Did she mean to compare me to a stick? If not, why then did Loo and her aunt, Miss Graves, both laugh?

As Mrs. Talbot and her sister walked together, I fell into the rear with Loo.

"You won't be here for our Review," I observed, in disappointed tones.

"Your Review! What is that?"

"Our Review. The Review on the 1st of August (by General Frothingham) of our regiment," I explained.

"Your *regiment*," Loo repeated. "Do you mean the Volunteer Corps?"

"Yes. I had quite made up my mind you would come to it."

"You should never make up your mind about anything that concerns the movements of other people, Mr. Tankerville," Loo said coolly. "If I were in Garthhampton I shouldn't think of going to see Volunteers. You see, I've known so much of the real thing. How awfully glad you'll be when it's over!"

"Oh no," I disclaimed. "I shall be very sorry indeed. I really enjoy the work."

"How extra-ordinary!" Loo laughed. "Mother dear, what do you think? Mr. Tankerville says he actually enjoys working up for inspection!"

"Review," I corrected gently.

"Oh yes—Review, I suppose you call it. You see, we have been accustomed to hear such grumbling and growling and moaning at the mere prospect of an inspection, that it seems odd to hear of anyone enjoying it—'If only this horrible inspection were over,' and the like."

"We are working very hard," I told her.

"Are you, though? Yes, I see you pass sometimes, in what I suppose you call your uniform," she said carelessly.

What I *call* my uniform!

"Then you won't remain for it?" I asked, keeping calm by an immense effort.

"Oh no. Besides, George—my brother, you know—meets us in Town on Tuesday. He is going with us."

"Really. I *am* glad!" I exclaimed. "I had been wondering how you would manage with your luggage and the Custom House, and all that."

"Oh dear, Mr. Tankerville," put in Mrs. Talbot in her rigid way, "I assure you we are very capable women."

"Rather," Loo laughed. "George just leaves it all to me, and I go and make eyes at the *douaniers*, and the luggage is passed before you can say 'Knife.'"

Positively Loo sometimes takes my breath away. I believe she is capable of anything.

"I could not understand a *lady* con-deseending to make what you call 'eyes' at a—a—*douan*——"

"*Douanier?*" supplemented Loo, actually taking the words out of my mouth. "Oh, I assure you some of them are awfully good-looking, and they're all awfully susceptible."

I turned away in silence, merely kissing my hand by way of saying good-night, we having reached their house. Unfortunately, I ran full bang against the wall of the opposite house, and nearly broke my nose. It was a startling and sad finale to a tender and idyllie farewell. I felt it at the time. As for Loo, she shut the door quickly, and just roared. I stayed long enough to hear that.

### EPISODE III.

LA BRUXELLES! Paris in miniature! Here I am located at the Hôtel de l'Europe, on the Place Royal. Just opposite to me is the great statue of Godfrey de Bouillon. I quite expect to see Loo stand rapturously staring up at him, with her head on one side and her "Is—n't he a fine fellow!"

There is the church of St. Jaques-sur-Candenburg; and to the left, as I sit at my window, I catch a charming glimpse of the Parc.

I feel free—light as air—gay as a child of the sunny South. It is true that I have written to Loo half a dozen times, and Loo has not answered me. Loo is coy—beauty is shy; not that Loo is a beauty, or given to either attribute.

True it is also, that Mrs. Talbot did write a letter as

frigid as herself, and told me distinctly, and without circumlocution, *not* to come. She underlined the negative. But I am not to be put off like that. As I told Loo once in speaking of a man who had accepted a half-refusal, "A man's not to be shaken off like that if he's one of the right sort, and means anything."

Loo said, "Oh!" That's a habit of hers—one I don't like.

Speaking of angels, you'll hear their wings; and there is Loo, with her mother, just crossing the Place towards the Montagne de la Cour. I will go after them, casually, and with a cigar, as if the meeting is one of pure accident.

"How do you do, Mrs. Talbot?" I said; she and Loo were looking in the window of a jeweller's shop.

Mrs. Talbot started visibly.

"Oh, is that *you*?" she remarked.

I replied pleasantly that I was myself, and asked if I might have the pleasure of calling upon them at their appartement?

"Oh yes, come round to our *lodgings* any time," Loo said cheerfully—evidently she is not sorry I have given her this proof of my devotion—"Rue du Prince Royal, 42."

"And how shall I find the Roo doo Pwinz Woy-al?" I asked.

"Rue du Prince Royal," she repeated. Somehow she made the words sound quite different. "Oh, take the tram to Porte Louise, and anyone will tell you."

All very fine that! I never have any difficulty in making myself understood. I just pound away at my French. No; what difficulty I have to contend with is in making out the answers.

"Turn up the street to the left, instead of going along the Avenue Louise, and you *can't* get wrong," Loo added, seeing, no doubt, that I looked puzzled.

Well, well, as to the means by which I found my way, n'importe. Suffice it to say that I did find the house. I knocked; I rang. A lady opened the door.

"Mademoi—at least, Madame Talbot—er—er—est-elle—er—umph—er——"

"Mrs. Talbot is at home, sir," returned the young lady in perfect English. "This way."

She was an uncommonly good-looking girl, no doubt about that; and her English was charming, having just the faintest soupçon of a foreign accent. She led me into a room almost lined with looking-glass, with a monster crystal chandelier in the centre of it, big enough for a ball-room. The walls were panelled with stamped green and mulberry coloured cloth, having a high dado of dark wood, defined by a narrow gilt line. The furniture was of rosewood and green velvet; there was a superb piano, curtains of whitest lace, flowers, plants, china. I must confess it, that room fairly took my breath away. I wonder how much they pay for it?

I heard Loo's laugh on the stairs—I could swear to her laugh anywhere—echoed a moment later by a man's deeper bass. I only caught a word or two of what she said; it was in French, and rendered less easy to hear by her laughter. What I did catch was something about "les braves Belges," and "la bataille de Waterloo."

Then followed an eager protest in the man's deeper tones:

"Non, non, non, ma'moiselle; juste au contraire."

Then Loo laughed again, and laughing, entered the room. She had her hat on.

"How d'you do?" she said carelessly, seating herself. "Jolly weather, isn't it?"

"Charming," I returned. "And how's mamma after her walk?"

"Mam-ma," Loo repeated. "Do you mean me môth-aw?"

"Er—yes," I answered.

"Oh! she'll be down directly."

"You are going out?"

"Yes. Oh, I say, Mr. Tankerville, that passion-flower



you sent the morning we left home was a regular humbug ; it never closed at all."

And I had staked my life on that flower closing up exactly four-and-twenty hours after it was cut. Just like my luck.

"And George and I went to the Wiertz Museum—awfully disappointed we were, too—regular claptraps and sell it was."

My confounded luck again. I don't know much of art, I admit it ; but I had described the Wiertz Musée very graphically to her, dwelling particularly on "The Rosebud," and "Hunger, Madness, and Crime." Carrie always declared they were rubbish, though I insisted they were not ; it was one of the few times that Carrie allowed her opinion to run contrary to mine.

Now it happened that whilst in town on my way hither, I met with an artist of some note who quite took Carrie's view ; as I said, just like my luck.

"Yes ; George was disgusted," Loo went on. "I didn't like them, but then I don't go in for art as he does."

"Did Mrs. Talbot go ?"

"Oh no ! she's not to be drawn in to horrors. We are going down this afternoon to the big Museum. The old pictures are mostly rather horrible, we think ; but the modern side has some charming things. Oh, here she is."

I expressed myself delighted to have an opportunity of escorting the ladies to the Musée.

"Oh, we don't want an escort !" Loo laughed. "We just lark about by ourselves very comfortably. All the same, you can come if you like. Will you take anything, though ? We can offer you some Gruyère cheese and biscuits, or a cognac and siphon."

I declined in haste. Was she trying to shock me ? It is not unlikely.

"Then let us go," said Mrs. Talbot, an odd smile lurking about the corners of her mouth. By-the-bye, I wonder what that smile meant. Some diablerie, of course.

On our way out we passed the open door of a sitting-room, through which I caught a glimpse of a man, young, big—six feet in height, at least.

“Have you the house to yourselves?” I asked, taking note of Loo’s smiling gesture of farewell as we passed the window.

“Some Irish people up above, of whom we have not made friends,” Mrs. Talbot answered.

“Was that a daughter of the house, who let me in?” I asked.

“Yes; there are three—such charming girls.”

“And one charming son,” inserted Loo, with the utmost coolness.

I felt the blood rising to my face, but I kept silent.

“I chaff him tremendously about Waterloo,” she continued. “I tell him the Belgians all ran away, declaring the English were beaten, and that the French were advancing on Brussels. His ‘Non, non, non, ma’moiselle,’ is the most amusing thing in the world. By-the-bye, mother dearie, I wanted to call at the boot-shop in the Chaussée d’Ixelles.”

“We can come back that way,” Mrs. Talbot replied.

“Very well.”

“Can you go both by the Porte Louise and the Chaussée d’Ixelles?” I asked.

“Yes; but Louise is a little nearer than the Chaussée d’Ixelles.”

Now everyone knows that the *x* is silent in French—per example, dix-huit.

“I know you’ll forgive me; but should you not say d’Ixelles?”

I was really unable to contain myself any longer.

“Ixelles, Mr. Tankerville.”

“Are you sure?”

“Quite sure.”

“But, nevertheless, I think you are wrong—‘Dixelles. It must mean, or have meant originally, ten girls—we say dix-huit.’”

"Don't know what it means. They all pronounce it *æ* about here, and I suppose they ought to know," Loo answered with a laugh.

"I feel absolutely certain you are wrong," I persisted gently.

"Oh! bet and have done with it. I don't mind laying a fiver."

Of course I couldn't do that; why, I might have lost. I offered to take the bet in gloves. Loo declined; she said Brussels gloves were not worth buying. I remember telling her how superexcellent were the ganteries de Bruxelles; but when she held out a *very* shabby hand, all holes and darns, and said she hadn't had them a week—why, I wished I had let the glove question alone. At this moment it occurred to me that it would be as well to start another subject.

"Been to the Wauxhall?" I asked, as we reached the tram-station.

"I didn't know there was one," Loo exclaimed. "Shall we go, mother?"

"If you like, dear," her mother answered.

"I shall be delighted to escort you," I said gallantly.

"Oh, you're awfully kind, but we don't *need* an escort," Loo cried, daringly.

"It is not a place to which ladies can go alone."

"English ladies can go anywhere alone," Loo retorted.

"Ah, here's the tram."

Presently the conductor came.

"Quelle place?"

I was obliged to look to Loo for instructions.

"Place Royal—deux," she said, holding out a franc.

"I will pay," I whispered.

"Oh, nonsense!" holding out the money and taking the tickets. "It is not likely we should allow you to pay for us."

"But when I am taking ladies anywhere I am accustomed to pay for them," I remonstrated.

"You are not *taking* us anywhere, Mr. Tankerville," she answered, with an air of unnecessary hauteur, at which her mother laughed aloud. "And we are not the kind of ladies for whom men are accustomed to pay."

I was glad to change the subject. Loo's voice is clear and high-pitched; and there are so many English loafing about Brussels.

That was the beginning of a battle-royal between Loo and myself.

"To tell you the truth," I said jokingly, one day, "I like standing Sam."

Loo's face turned to absolute stone.

"I'm sure I don't know what *standing Sam* is, Mr. Tankerville, unless it is that you like paying money for other people; but you seem to forget that me mōth-aw and myself are not a couple of housemaids out for an airing."

We were just getting into the tram as she spoke. She and "me mōth-aw" sat together on the bench third from the driver; I, there being no room, on the one immediately behind them. Beside me were two young officers in uniform.

"Pray, do let me pay," I whispered. "It must look so odd to the officials, and we can settle up afterwards;" of course, having no such intention.

Loo turned upon me like a fury.

"Really, Mr. Tankerville," she exclaimed in her high tones, "why should you have the honour and glory of paying for us—with our money, too?"

That was a facer; and the worst of it all was, that the two young puppies in the beggarly uniform of the Sapeur-Pompier, evidently understanding English, burst out laughing, and laughed immoderately all the way to Place Royal. I should like to box that young woman's ears. She will try me too far one of these days; I feel convinced of it.

## EPISODE IV.

I HAD every reason, when I first began to pay Loo any attention, to believe that at no very distant date she would be very well off. She is the only child, she and her brother, of course—and by-the-bye, I may mention that he returned to England before I left it—of a large and elderly family of rich people. Not that Loo ever said anything to me on that point, always declaring herself as being, and likely to be, as poor as a rat. But I knew a little of Loo's family, and put two and two very neatly together in my own mind; though to be sure I couldn't estimate to a thousand or two what might be the extent of her fortune, and it was a question I was scarcely in a position to ask. Still I was sure she would be an excellent *parti*. She is undoubtedly a perfect lady, if at times rather brusque and plain of speech. She has an attractive appearance, and if not handsome, is what the Italians call *distinto*; dances beautifully, and knows something pretty much about everything.

Combined with her probable fortune, I look upon Loo as a fair compensation for the loss of poor dear Carrie. It is true that I am to enjoy Carrie's fortune during my life; but then, as her father left all to his wife for life, and my late mother-in-law is alive and likely to live for ages, it may be years before I come into possession of it—awful thought, she may outlive me! Loo invariably speaks of her as "your mother-in-law;" but, as I tell her, "death severs all those ties."

Now it is very evident that the Talbots have plenty of money at present; and, as I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that Loo is sixteen or seventeen years younger than poor dear Carrie, I cannot but regard her as compensation for the loss of so faithful and devoted a partner as she was. Only one thing disturbs my peace of mind: she has not the same sweet yielding gentleness of disposition as my late wife. To Carrie, my word was law; she never said "no"

to anything *I* said. To my mind, nothing equals that particular trait in the feminine character. I wish Loo had more of it. I admire the girl's character immensely, as I should admire the fire of an unbroken filly ; but I intend, when we are married, to alter a good deal which now strikes me as highly objectionable. She is not sufficiently yielding—though to her mother she yields instantly. Perhaps it is only her playfulness ; girls like to show their power over their suitors—Loo is only like all the rest.

All the same, it is somewhat remarkable that she never does give way to me. I won't condescend to ask the question, but did she, I wonder, treat that fellow in India so ? I wish she hadn't been so desperately fond of him—little evidences of it keep cropping up continually ; per example, I called at their appartement—I have quite got into the habit of calling daily—rather earlier than usual yesterday morning, and surprised them at breakfast, Loo with her hair floating far below her waist.

"Your hair is superb," I found an opportunity of whispering.

"So most people tell me," she said coolly, and quite aloud.

"You wouldn't like to part with any of it ?" I hinted.

"Certainly not, Mr. Tankerville," then sighed impatiently. "I never but once gave any of it away, and then it *was* a lump—as thick as my wrist."

"Foolish child," murmured the mother.

"Ah, yes, foolish child," echoed Loo, with a sigh and a shiver. "It's a horridly unlucky thing to give any of your hair away." Then her mood changed, and she began to laugh. "I think I'll give you a bit, Mr. Tankerville."

Did that mean that she didn't care whether I had good luck or bad ? She took care, though, *not* to give me any.

Whether it was the allusion to the old love or not, I don't know ; but this morning Loo and I have had quite a chapter of accidents—I should say disagreeables.

First of all, Mrs. Talbot, as soon as we reached the Parc,

declared herself tired ; how she could be I don't know, for she took that confounded tram from Porte Louise.

"Oh ! I want some peaches," Loo cried ; "I'm so thirsty."

I had taken four fine peaches to their appartement that morning, and reminded her of the fact.

"Yes, it was awfully good of you ; but I want some *now*, this minute." She laughed. "So I'm going to the market to get some. You stay and talk to mother."

"I cannot think of allowing it," I said, decidedly.

Loo looked me up and down, and through and through, with contemptuous eyes.

"*You* can't think of—allowing—*me*," she repeated slowly, then broke into a little scornful laugh. "My good man, I have travelled five hundred miles perfectly alone."

"I shudder to think of it," I cried.

"Yes. I was very sea-sick for seventeen hours," she returned, prosaically. "I couldn't stand by myself when I landed. I'm a wretched sailor."

I don't know what put it into my head ; but I began telling them about Virgil. They listened very attentively till I mentioned the Styx.

"Then he came to a river, the river Styx," I said. "S—t—y—x, you know."

Which of them laughed the most, it would be impossible to say. I think, of the two, Mrs. Talbot had it. To use Loo's modern phraseology, they roared.

"What *are* you laughing at ?" I asked. "I assure you it is spelt so."

"Ha ! ha ! ha !" Loo laughed, wiping her tears away. Mrs. Talbot was simply speechless. "And there was a boat and a ferryman, and the ferryman's name was Charon. C—h—a—r—o—n ! Ha ! ha ! ha !"

At this juncture Mrs. Talbot found her voice, in spite of her laughter—her usual freezing, put-you-down tones.

"Oh ! de-ar, Mr. Tankerville," she cried. "We are not quite ignorant."

"I assure you not many ladies would know anything whatever about it," I cried, warmly.

"Oh, nonsense! most fairly educated women know that much."

"I assure you the average——"

"Mother knows as much Latin as you do," Loo put in, impatiently. "You have only made a lame affair of Virgil, so let us go to the market and try peaches instead. I shall call you Charon," she continued, as we walked off, leaving Mrs. Talbot with her paper: then with a sharp shiver, and one of those sudden fits of gravity, in which mood I like her best of all, added, "Ah, me! we shall all have to cross over in that ferry-boat one of these days. It seems hard to realize sometimes, does it not?"

"For my part," I returned, falling in with her humour, "I believe the Almighty sent me into this world to do some special and great work; and when it is done, He will take me out of it."

Loo changed instantly.

"Don't talk to me about the Almighty," she said bluntly. "You make me positively sick."

What did she—what could she mean? I admit that there were passages in my earlier life, of which I should not like Loo to be cognizant. Can she know anything of them?

"Let us look at this lace a minute," she said, evidently to change the conversation.

I acquiesced.

"I have quantities of that lace at home, in every stage of manufacture," I told her. "When my poor dear wife died, I packed it all away with her jewels and wardrobe. It is just like this," I said, pointing to the window.

"Ah! I suppose you bought it when you were here before," she said, carelessly.

"Oh no! my wife made it."

"Oh, modern-point!" her tone was slighting in the extreme. "Really, I wonder you kept it."



"Kept it!" I echoed.

"Yes; I should have thought you would have given it to her mother and sisters," she said sharply. "Her clothes too, you say—did you keep *them*?"

"Ye—es!" I admitted.

A queer smile curled about her lips.

"Then you have those sables she used to wear? Those her mother gave her."

"Oh yes! of course."

"I thought her mother had them put on to that new velvet coat for her."

"So she did, for her birthday."

"Why, I met her one morning three or four months after poor Carrie died, and she told me she had been paying the bill for it. Well, I think if I were Mrs. Conway, and you had kept the coat, I should have let you pay the bill. Then did you keep her trinkets and things?"

"Yes; a lovely belt and *chatelaine* made of coins," I began, thinking how well it would become Loo's slender waist.

"I never heard of such a mean thing in all my life," said Loo deliberately. "And when Mrs. Conway has all those grandchildren. Why, the things cannot be of the slightest use to you."

Not be of the slightest use! I had thought how well they would become Loo's fine person. Carrie was an uncommonly fine woman; if anything, a trifle larger built than Loo. I had thought that would be no disadvantage to the various garments.

"Here we are," she said, turning into the passage of the Madeleine.

Instantly we were assailed by a babel of unintelligible jargon, the market-people evidently taking us for a newly-married couple. They wanted me to buy flowers for Loo; I was not averse to it.

"Kom-biang?" I asked, surveying the huge bouquets critically.

The vendor answered at some length. I was obliged to shake my head, not understanding bad French.

Loo explained, "Seven francs fifty," and laughed. "Why, it's perfectly absurd."

Before I could reckon seven francs fifty into English coin she had walked on with a careless "Bonjour."

The man caught her back by her dress.

"Je n'ai pas besoin," she told him.

She always professed herself as being utterly unable to speak French, yet somehow she seemed able to get on well enough with these people.

"Six francs, mademoiselle," he pleaded. "Très bon marché."

Loo laughed again, and repeated her "Bonjour."

"I should like to buy one," I told her.

"Would you? Six francs is too much," she said in the most business-like tone imaginable.

So forthwith she and the man haggled and gabbled in a language I could not understand in the least. I had already discovered that she knew as much Flemish as French, and very wild it used to make me when she would sit on the front seat of those beastly trams and talk to the driver; having to talk to Mrs. Talbot, because I couldn't follow single word of what Loo was saying. And when I remonstrated with the girl, she stopped my mouth by declaring she was studying character. As if *my* wife need study any-one's character but mine.

At last she announced that he had come down to two-fifty.

"You can't very well beat him down lower than that; and I think it's worth it."

I took out a handful of silver, considering the while what two-fifty meant. Loo pounced upon a broad silver piece and handed it over to the man, popping the change into my hand amongst the other money before I could reckon anything. My accounts will be all wrong; however, I must

make them as square as I can. I asked her to direct the man to send it to my hotel.

"Who's it for?" she asked.

"For you, of course."

"For me! Oh, you shouldn't have troubled to buy it for me. I don't much care for flowers, except when they're loose. It's really very kind of you, though. Send it to the hotel? Oh, they won't care to do that—take it yourself."

Eventually that was what I had to do. I could not tell the man myself, for his stock of French seemed limited, and Loo wouldn't help me out with the Flemish. In fact, she went so far as to say, if I didn't carry it, she wouldn't accept it. So we returned to the Parc: she laden with fruit and crushed roses—I mean roses crumpled by nature—I carrying my great bouquet, in size as large as a wash-hand-basin. I felt very absurd, but Loo seemed tremendously amused.

Indeed she laughed so, that I seized the opportunity of broaching a somewhat unpleasant subject which had weighed on my mind all the morning.

"I think you met my sister at my house," I said, as we toiled up the Rue de la Madeleine.

"Yes, I did."

"She and her husband are coming here on Saturday."

"Really."

Loo was not very much interested in my sister or her husband.

"I hope you won't mind," I said, hesitatingly—I know what Jemima's temper is, and Loo's high spirit—"but my sister, Mrs. Pergolesi Stubbins, has always been very much spoilt. She has rather an imperious manner, and—and—she is a good deal accustomed to her own way—and—and—if—er—if——"

"I'll tell you what, Mr. Tankerville," Loo said laughingly, yet with a dangerous gleam in her eyes, "if Mrs. Pergolesi Stubbins has the impertinence to give me any of her imperious

manner, she will get the worst of it. *I* have been a good deal spoilt. *I* am accustomed to my own way, you know ; and then, I've at least thirty years the advantage of her."

It was a rude speech, I admit it ; still, I must confess I do *not* blame Loo for making it. I must keep them as much apart as possible. I know what *Jemima's* temper is—no one better : imperious is a decidedly euphonious way of putting it. Even poor dear *Carrie*, who was amiability itself, could not get on with her ; and strictly *entre nous*, I shouldn't be at all sorry if Loo, unlike *Carrie*, who simply kept out of her way, were roused sufficiently to take *Jemima* thoroughly down.

"They won't want us much, you know ; they've not been married long—they are as yet all in all to each other," I said, thinking of the time when Loo and I would be all in all to each other also.

"Elderly spoons," remarked Loo flippantly. "Oh Lord!"

The remark absolutely took my breath away, but Loo never seemed to notice.

"To be sure," she went on, "she was a widow when I met her—*Mrs. Goldstein*. A distinguished-looking woman.

I glanced aside to see if she were quite serious. Oh yes ; not a ghost of a smile was on her face.

"She is considered very handsome," I remarked.

"Oh, is she ? I should hardly call her that myself ; 'distinguished-looking' seems to me to describe her exactly."

Loo is quite right. *Jemima* is of distinguished appearance ; *entre nous* she is of distinguished temper, too—of the order known as "tiger-cat." I am afraid when she and Loo come in contact as probable sisters-in-law, it will be a case of Greek meeting Greek—not that I wish to imply that Loo is a tiger-cat, far from it. I admire Loo's character immensely : her disposition is most sunny ; never yet have I seen her out of temper, and I have watched her closely. All her little daring speeches to me are made with a laughing air, and with a series of dimples twinkling about her mouth. She *says* when I have once seen her in a temper

I shall never forget it ; but Loo has a way of putting her self in the worst possible light. I rather admire her modesty.

Jemima and her husband are to come to-morrow ; they remain in Bruxelles three days on their way to Homburg. For my part, I wish the visit was over.

By-the-bye, Loo is a daring little puss. She stopped her ears this morning and cried out :

“For goodness’ sake, Charon, do pronounce it as it’s spelt.”

“What is that ?” I asked, blankly.

“Why, Homburg, to be sure. It must be easier to say Hom-burg than Home-bourg. And when you’re talking English, why give the places a foreign sound ? Why should you say Co-long ? It certainly is not German, for that is Cöln. It is not French, for that is pronounced like Boulogne, which isn’t exactly called Boolong.”

“I always call it Co-long,” I said, a trifle startled by her vehemence.

“But it’s wrong. The English is Kolone. And the other day, when we were talking about the Rhine, you corrected me every time I mentioned a place,” in an aggrieved tone.

“Did I ?”

I remembered the circumstance distinctly.

“Yes ; and all wrong too. You called Bonn, Boonne. I should say B-O-N-N is the easiest of the two ; and when I mentioned Co-blenz, you repeated it directly as Co-blaaantz.”

“But it is Co-blaaantz,” I maintained.

“But it is not ; any German would tell you so. Frankfurt, too—you called it, the moment I had uttered the word Franc’ for’. Of course, it makes no matter to me what you call them, only I do not like to be corrected before other people, particularly when I know I’m in the right.”

“I won’t do it any more,” I said, humbly, though I was raging inwardly.

“Please don’t ; and the next time I say anything about

the legends of the Rhine, don't correct me the next minute with lee-gends."

Then she laughed, and so did I.

"Ah, I'll pay you out for all this, one of these days," I cried.

It was a slip—a most foolish one. I admit it. Indeed, I could have bitten my tongue off the moment the words had passed my lips. For the very first time, in all my intercourse with Loo, I saw a gleam of real anger in her eyes. She shut her teeth with a sharp *clique*—ah! no, no; I have got so into the habit of using French words; I should say *click*—looked straight at me, with her wide-open eyes, and smiled a smile that had no mirth in it.

"You---*nev*—er will," she said, deliberately. "Never! never! *nev*—er!" and what is more, she said it uncommonly as if she meant it.

I don't think I should have minded it so much, only Mrs. Talbot laughed—a little scornful laugh.

"It is time for us to go home, dear," she said.

"Yes, let us have a victoria," Loo replied.

She hailed one before I could lift my hand. However, I was determined she should not give the directions to the driver.

"Er—cocher!" I said, authoritatively; "to—er—Kwur-rong-doo, Roo doo Prwanz Woy-al."

Just like my luck—the man was semi-imbecile. He scratched his head, looked round at Loo and said, "Quelle place?"

I repeated the directions—nothing could have been plainer, but not one gleam of understanding shone on that idiot's face.

Loo roared. As for the old cat, Mrs. Talbot, she sat back in the little carriage and laughed till she wept—the idiot on the box laughed hardest of the three.

At last Loo found her voice.

"Straat de Prinz-Roial—twee en vierte."

I was convinced it was mere polyglot gibberish—after

wards Loo said I was right—but, would you believe it, that grinning beast on the box grinned worse than ever, shouted “Ja—ja—Jevrouw,” whipped up his horse and was off in a jiffy, nearly running over my toes as he went.

#### EPISODE V.

I KNEW what Jemima would be—I was convinced of it. She has done it this time, and no mistake about it. However, happily it is for herself she has done—not for me.

The day after they arrived, I took an opportunity of presenting her to Mrs. Talbot and Loo.

The effect was magical !

Jemima went up smiling in her most gracious manner—the Talbots are gentlewomen—I need say no more. Yet, by the extraordinary freemasonry which exists among women, the meeting was a dead failure. Why, I cannot say. I am sure there was no lack of cordiality on either side, but Jemima didn’t stay three minutes. Pergolesi, however, did. He stayed about an hour and a half. The Talbots took to him instantly—Mrs. Talbot unbent, and they found they had many mutual friends. I was a little out of it. Not that I minded that—I was only too glad they proved such agreeable company for each other.

As for Loo, she appeared charmed by my sister’s husband, and showed to her greatest advantage. I may add here, that when and where Loo really exerts herself to please, she lays aside all her little mannerisms and becomes a very fascinating young woman. Pergolesi evidently found her so, to judge by the time he remained chatting.

“I think I ought to go and look after Jemima,” I said at length.

“Yes, do,” said Pergolesi, but he didn’t stir.

So I went. I found her stamping up and down, just like an enraged tigress.

“Where is Pergolesi ?” she demanded.

"Oh, he's with my friends," I answered, as pleasantly as I could.

"What do you mean by keeping him in this manner?"

"Why did you go away?" I asked. "Come back with me."

"Come back! Not I, indeed. I am going to the hotel; I shall leave Brussels to-night."

I watched her out of sight, and then I rejoined the others.

"Where is your sister?" Pergolesi asked—he always speaks of his wife thus.

"She has gone back to the hotel. I think she's not very well," I answered, making the best I could of the matter.

"Then I must go too," he said, rising; but he didn't go for a good bit then. Poor chap! I've no doubt he had a very mauvais quart d'heure when he did go. I know Jemima.

"What do you think of my brother-in-law?" I said to Loo, sitting down beside her.

Loo looked straight up into my eyes.

"Charming! Awfully handsome—aristocratic—everything pleasant. I *do* admire that style of man!"

I was pleased, though Pergolesi is as great a contrast to me as could well be found—a big, fair fellow with sleepy eyes.

"Do you admire his way of speaking?" I asked. Pergolesi speaks about the rate of a word a minute.

"Rather!" spoken in a way intended to convey that she admired it very much. "Was he rich?"

"No. He has a little; my sister was a rich widow, you know."

"Oh—I—see," her tone was significant in the extreme. "I say, what was the matter with her, that she went off like that? It wasn't very mannerly, was it?"

"It certainly was not. However, you needn't mind." And then I couldn't resist telling her about Jemima, and how I found her stamping up and down.



A dozen little imps of mischief dimpled out on Loo's cheeks instantly.

"What fun!" she cried. "If they stop here, won't I flirt with Mr. Pergolesi—I don't think he'd mind."

But they left Bruxelles that very night. I know what Jemima's temper is, and I took care Pergolesi should know it also. I broached the subject when he and I were talking over the matter of settlements.

"May I ask," I said, "if you have ever noticed the slight acrimony of my sister's temper?"

He laughed a little; said he had witnessed some tremendous scenes, but hoped to conquer all that.

"I hope so too, my dear chap," I told him; "but you'll be a devilish clever fellow if you do."

"Poor fellow!" murmured Loo softly.

Loo is altering. She has grown much more sweet and charming lately, and she will undoubtedly be able to hold her own with Jemima.

## EPISODE VI.

It is all over! Loo and I have parted! I have been cheated—duped—made a fool of—but there, I will finish my story.

I left the Talbots in Bruxelles, my holiday having expired. I left Loo with much tenderness, though I had not an opportunity of saying anything private.

When I got home, I was hailed at my club with—

"Hallo, old man, where have you been? haven't seen you for ages!"

"Continong," I replied tersely; "never enjoyed myself so much in my life."

"Really! The Talbots are abroad somewhere, are they not?"

"Er—yes. I—I—in fact, I went to join them."

“B—y Jove!” there was a regular chorus. “So Loo has capitulated at last. I heard she’d gone to London to buy her trousseau.”

I smiled serenely.

“So it’s all settled, eh?”

I smiled again.

“It has all been *settled* some time; but—you see—my term of mourning—er——”

“Oh, going to be married when the year’s up, eh?” said some one impatiently. “By Jove, Tankerville, but you’re a lucky dog!”

I admitted the soft impeachment. I said I *was* a lucky dog. I laughed! They laughed! We all laughed!

I left the club then, having elsewhere to go. At the foot of the stairs I paused to fold up my umbrella, which had become undone, and I heard a voice say distinctly:

“Poor girl!”

I stayed to hear more—I confess I was rooted to the spot.

“Jolly girl!” I heard another voice say. “Great shame to marry a brute like Tankerville. I suppose she wants to let the other fellow see——”

“I wonder if she knows about——”

But I rushed away then; I didn’t want to hear any more.

A fortnight later they returned. I did not see them for several days; in fact, I did not know they had come back until I met Loo and her aunt in the Winter Garden.

In an instant I realized that something had gone wrong. Loo wouldn’t look at me—wouldn’t even speak to me.

“What’s the matter, Loo?” I asked, bending down, for she was seated on a chair at the end of a row facing the orchestra.

“Don’t call me ‘Loo,’ please,” she said curtly. “I am Miss Talbot!”

“Have I made you angry?”

“Yes.”

“Come with me into one of the alleys away from this crush,” I whispered. “I ought to have an explanation.”

"I don't want an explanation," Loo said loftily. "I prefer remaining as we are."

"Out of friends," I said reproachfully.

"Out of friends! We never were *friends*," she answered.

"But it is not fair to condemn a man unheard."

Happily Miss Graves was chaperon this evening, and is the easiest of duennas.

"What have I done?" I implored.

"Oh! I'll tell you," recklessly. "I hear you've been chaffed about me in that—*club* of yours"—the pause before and emphasis on the word "club" was anything but flattering—and so far from contradicting what was said, you added to it. You told them I'd gone to London to buy my trousseau—my trousseau. When I want *that* trousseau, I shall go to New Zealand for it."

"I assure you——" I began.

"Oh! don't add to it by denial," she cried scornfully; "I know it is true, every word of it."

"It is not true," I asserted; a fib or two was nothing compared to losing Loo. "Who told you?" I asked.

"I shall not tell you," curtly. "And that's not all. You said you'd been abroad to join us—that everything had been settled some time; otherwise, that you and I were engaged, and were only waiting until the year was over, to be—*married*. Ugh! I'd rather be hanged."

"Loo!" I cried.

"*Don't* call me 'Loo.' I won't have it."

"Who told you all this?"

"I decline to tell you; but it was somebody whose word I can trust."

"I insist upon knowing."

"You—insist!" looking at me with scornful eyes. "I decline to tell you."

"Oh, well!"—I was beginning to lose my temper—"there are ways and means of making people speak out."

"Making people speak out?" Loo's eyes opened as if she was never going to close them again. "Do you threaten

me with a court of justice? You need not lower yourself; all the courts of justice in the world would not frighten me. You know I'm rather a clever woman, Mr. Tankerville. I know just twice as much about law as you do."

She was evidently not to be frightened into anything. I changed my tone.

"Loo, don't you care for me?"

"Not a bit. And don't call me 'Loo,' please. I never gave you permission to do so."

"I know you care for me."

"Mr. Tankerville," she said gravely, "have I ever said a really civil word to you?"

"Well, hardly ever," I admitted.

"Have I not persistently and systematically shown myself to you in the worst possible light? Have I not been persistently rude to you? Indeed, I blush to think how rude I often have been. Have I not done everything I could to prevent your speaking out? Did I not leave your letters unanswered? Did not my mother write to you plainly, 'If you will take my advice, you will *not* come to Brussels whilst we are here'? Have I not many and many a time made you so angry you could almost have killed me? Did we not tell you in veiled terms and in plain terms that we did not want you?"

"I thought it was all fun."

"Fun!" In spite of her anger she laughed. "Mr. Tankerville, when a woman cares anything for a man she does not treat him as I have treated you, in fun or otherwise."

"Then what do you want me to do?" I cried, in desperation.

"To cut me."

"Do you wish *all* to be at an end?"

"Why, have I not been trying my hardest to prevent *all* ever having a beginning?" she asked coolly.

"May I write to your mother?" I asked.

"Why? What has she to do with it?"

"To explain matters; to—to——"

"It won't be of the least use ; this is my affair. Besides, you won't get any help from her."

"I am sure she will see the advisability—my establishment—my means—my servants—my——"

"My mother would be the last to urge me even to take those matters into consideration, when the important one of feeling is settled," Loo said coldly. "No, Mr. Tankerville ; we did everything we could do to prevent this happening, and you have only yourself to thank for it all."

"I never saw—I never thought—if I had the least idea my attentions were in any way distasteful to you——" I began.

"Oh, nonsense, Mr. Tankerville !" she interrupted brusquely. "You saw very well ; and oh, didn't you mean to pay me out for it all by-and-by !"

I have written to Mrs. Talbot long letters, to which I have received the most unsatisfactory replies. The story has gone the round of the town, and a good many people have had the bad taste to allude to it. I must lay aside my lightened habiliments, and declare my devotion to poor Carrie's memory unchanged ; but, unfortunately, as two of the club fellows overheard the whole of my last conversation with Loo, I shall not be able altogether to convey that impression to everybody.

A month has passed. Jemima and her husband came to visit me for a week. Pergolesi's first question was for Miss Talbot, and when the wedding was to come off. I replied evasively. Just like my usual luck—we met the Talbots in the street two minutes after, and at the grave bows which were exchanged he looked surprised, then laughed. I trust I shall repay that laugh one of these days with interest.

This evening I took him to my club, and the moment I showed my face the fellows all shouted :

"Hallo, Tankerville ! come and play *Loo*."

It is a poor joke ; but they seem as if they would never be tired of it.

## *KOOSJE: A STUDY OF DUTCH LIFE.*

HER name was Koosje van Kampen, and she lived in Utrecht—that most quaint of quaint cities—the Venice of the north.

All her life had been passed under the shadow of the grand old Dom Kerk ; she had played bo-peep behind the columns and arcades of the ruined moss-grown cloisters ; had slipped up and fallen down the steps leading to the grachts ; had once or twice, in very early life this, been fished out of those same slimy, stagnant waters ; had wandered under the great lindens in the Baan, and gazed curiously up at the stork's nest in the tree by the Veterinary School ; had pattered about the hollow-sounding streets in her noisy wooden klompen ; had danced and laughed ; had quarrelled and wept, and fought and made friends again, to the tune of the silver chimes high up in the Dom—chimes that were sometimes old Nederlandsche hymns, sometimes Mendelssohn's melodious and tender "*Lieder ohne Worte*."

But that was ever so long ago ; and now she had left her romping childhood behind her, and had become a maid-servant—a very dignified and aristocratic maid-servant indeed—with no less a sum than eight pounds ten a year in wages.

She lived in the house of a professor, who dwelt on the Munster-Kerkhoff, one of the most aristocratic parts of that wonderfully aristocratic city ; and once or twice every week

you might have seen her, if you had been there to see, busily engaged in washing the red-tile and blue-slate pathway in front of the Professor's house. You would have seen that she was very pleasant to look at, this Koosje, very comely and clean, whether she happened to be very busy or whether it had been Sunday and, with her best gown on, she was out for a promenade in the Baan, after duly going to service ; for Koosje was strictly orthodox, and attended service as regularly as the Sabbath dawned, in the grand old Gothic choir of the cathedral.

During the week she wore always the same costume as does every other servant in the country : a skirt of black stuff, short enough to show a pair of very neat feet and well-turned ankles, clad in cloth shoes and knitted stockings that showed no wrinkles ; over the skirt a bodice and kirtle of lilac, made with a neatly-gathered frilling about her round brown throat. Above the frilling, five or six rows of unpolished garnet beads, fastened by a massive clasp of gold filigree ; and on her head a spotless white cap tied with a neat bow under her chin—as neat, let me tell you, as an Englishman's tie at a party.

But it was on Sunday that Koosje shone forth in all the glory of a black gown and her jewellery—with great earrings to match the clasp of her necklace, and a heavy chain and cross to match that again, and one or two rings ; while on her head she wore an immense cap, much too big to put a bonnet over, though for walking she was most particular to have gloves.

Then, indeed, she was a young person to be treated with respect, and with respect she undoubtedly was treated. As she passed along the quaint resounding streets, many a head was turned to look after her ; but Koosje went on her way, like the staid maiden she was, duly impressed with the fact that she was principal servant to Professor von Dijk, the most celebrated authority on the study of osteology in Europe. So Koosje never heeded the looks, turned her head neither to the right hand nor to the left, but went

sedately on her business or pleasure, whichever it happened to be.

It was not likely that such a treasure could remain long unnoticed and unsought after. Servants in the Netherlands, I hear, are not so good but that they might be better ; and most people knew what a treasure Professor van Dijck had in his Koosje. However, as the Professor conscientiously raised her wages from time to time, Koosje never thought of leaving him.

But there is one bribe no woman can resist—the bribe that is offered by Love. As Professor van Dijck had expected and feared, that bribe ere long was held out to Koosje, and Koosje was too weak to resist it. Not that he wished her to do so. If the girl had a chance of settling well and happily for life, he would be the last to dream of throwing any obstacles in her way. He had come to be an old man himself—he lived all alone, save for his servants, in a great rambling house, whose huge apartments were all set out with horrible anatomical preparations and grisly skeletons : and, though the stately passages were paved with white marble, and led into rooms which would easily have accommodated crowds of guests, he went into no society, save that of *savants* as old and fossil-like as himself ; in other words, he was an old bachelor who lived entirely for his profession and the study of the great masters—by the interpretation of a genuine old Stradivari. Yet the old Professor had a memory ; he recalled the time when he had been young who now was old—the time when his heart was a good deal more tender, his blood a great deal warmer, and his fancy very much more easily stirred than nowadays. There was a dead and gone romance which had broken his heart, sentimentally speaking—a romance long since crumbled into dust, which had sent him for comfort to the study of osteology and the music of the Stradivari ; yet the memory thereof made him considerably more lenient to Koosje's weakness than Koosje herself had ever expected to find him.



Not that she had intended to tell him just at first—she was only three-and-twenty—and, though Jan van der Welde was as fine a fellow as could be seen in Utrecht, and had good wages and something put by, Koosje was by no means inclined to rush headlong into matrimony with undue hurry. It was more pleasant to live in the Professor's good house, to have delightful walks arm-in-arm with Jan under the trees in the Baan or round the Singles, parting under the stars, with many a lingering word and promise to meet again ; it was during one of those very partings that the Professor suddenly became aware, as he walked placidly home, of the change that had come into Koosje's life.

However, Koosje told him blushing that she did not wish to leave him just at present, so he did not trouble himself about the matter : he was a wise man, the old authority on osteology, and quoted oftentimes, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

So the courtship sped smoothly on, seeming for once to contradict the truth of the old saying, "The course of true love never did run smooth." The course of their love did, of a truth, run marvellously smooth indeed. Koosje, if a trifle coy, was pleasant and sweet ; Jan as fine a fellow as ever waited round a corner on a cold winter's night. So, brightly the happy days slipped by, when suddenly a change was effected in the Professor's household, which made, as a matter of course, somewhat of a change in Koosje's life. It came about in this wise.

Koosje had been on an errand for the Professor, one that had kept her out of doors some time ; and it happened that the night was bitterly cold—the cold indeed was fearful. The air had that damp rawness so noticeable in the Dutch climate ; a thick mist overhung the city, and a drizzling rain came down with a steady persistence such as quickly soaked through the stoutest and thickest garments. The streets were well-nigh empty. That great business thoroughfare, the Oude Gracht, was almost deserted, and as Koosje hurried along the Meinerbroederstraat—for she had a

second commission there—she drew her great shawl more tightly round her, muttering crossly, "What weather! yesterday so warm, to-day so cold. 'Tis enough to give one the fever."

She delivered her message, and ran on through the Oude Kerkhoff as fast as her feet could carry her, when, just as she turned the corner into the Domplein, a fierce gust of wind, accompanied by a blinding shower of rain, assailed her; her foot caught against something soft and heavy, and she fell.

"Bless us!" she ejaculated blankly. "What fool has left a bundle out on the path on such a night? Pitch-dark, with half the lamps out, and rain and mist enough to blind one."

She gathered herself up, rubbing elbows and knees vigorously, casting the while dark glances at the obnoxious bundle which had caused the disaster. Just then the wind was lulled, the lamp close at hand gave out a steady light, which shed its rays through the fog upon Koosje and the bundle, from which, to the girl's horror and dismay, came a faint moan. Quickly she drew nearer, when she perceived that what she had believed to be a bundle was indeed a woman, apparently in the last stage of exhaustion.

Koosje tried to lift her; but the dead-weight was beyond her, young and strong as she was. Then the rain and the wind came on again, in fiercer gusts than before; the woman's moans grew louder and louder, and what to do Koosje knew not.

She struggled on for the few steps which lay between her and the Professor's house, and then she rang a peal which resounded through the echoing passages, bringing Dortje, the other maid, running out; after the manner of her class, imagining all sorts of terrible catastrophes had happened. She uttered a cry of relief when she perceived that it was only Koosje, who, without vouchsafing any explanation, dashed past her and ran straight into the Professor's room.

"Oh, Professor!" she gasped out; but between her efforts

to move the woman, her struggle with the elements, and her race down the passage, her breath was utterly gone.

The Professor looked up from his book and his tea-tray in surprise. For a moment he thought that Koosje, his domestic treasure, had altogether taken leave of her senses ; for she was streaming with water, covered with mud, and head and cap were in a state of disorder such as neither he nor anyone else had ever seen them in since the last time she had been fished out of the Nieuwe Gracht.

“What is the matter, Koosje ?” he asked, regarding her gravely over his spectacles.

“There is a woman outside—dying,” she panted. “I fell over her.”

“You had better try to get her in then,” the old gentleman said in quite a relieved tone. “You and Dortje must bring her in. Dear, dear, poor soul ! but it is a dreadful night.”

The old gentleman shivered as he spoke, and drew a little nearer to the tall white porcelain stove.

It was, as he had said a minute before, a terrible night. He could hear the wind beating about the house and rattling the casements, and moaning down the chimneys. And to think any poor soul should be out on such a night—*dying*. Heaven preserve others who might be belated or houseless in any part of the world !

He fell then into a fit of abstraction—a habit not uncommon with very learned men—wondering why life should be so different to different people. Why he should be in that warm, handsome room, with its soft rich hangings and carpet, with its beautiful furniture of carved wood, its pictures, and the rare china scattered here and there among the grim array of skeletons which were his delight. He wondered why he should take his tea out of costly and valuable Oriental china, his sugar and cream out of antique silver, while other poor souls had no tea at all, and nothing to take it out of if they had. He wondered why he should have a lamp under his teapot, that was a very marvel of

art-transparencies. Why he should have every luxury, and this poor creature should be dying in the street, amid the wind and the rain. It was all very unequal.

It was very odd, the Professor argued, leaning his back against the tall warm stove—it was very odd indeed. He began to feel that grand as the study of osteology undoubtedly is, he ought not to permit it to become so engrossing as to blind him to the study of the greater philosophies of life. His reverie was, however, broken by the abrupt re-entrance of Koosje, who this time was a trifle less breathless than she had been before.

"We have got her into the kitchen, Professor," she announced. "She is a child—a mere baby, and so pretty! She has opened her eyes and spoken."

"Give her some soup and wine—hot," said the Professor without stirring.

"But won't you come?" she asked.

The Professor hesitated—he hated attending in cases of illness, though he was a properly qualified doctor, and in an emergency would lay his prejudice aside.

"Or shall I run across for the good Dr. Smit?" Koosje asked. "He would come in a minute, only it is *such* a night!"

At that moment a fiercer gust than before rattled at the casements, and the Professor laid aside his scruples.

"I will come, Koosje," he said briefly.

He followed his housekeeper down the chilly marble-flagged passage into the kitchen, where he never went for months together. A cosy enough, pleasant place, with a deep valance hanging from the broad mantel-shelf, with many great copper pans, bright and shining as new gold, and furniture all scrubbed to the whiteness of snow.

In an armchair before the opened stove sat the rescued girl—a slight golden-haired thing, with wistful blue eyes, and a frightened air. Every moment she caught her breath in a half-hysterical sob, while violent shivers shook her from head to foot.

The Professor went and looked at her over his spectacles, as if she had been some curious specimen of his favourite study ; but at the same time he kept at a respectful distance from her.

"Give her some soup and wine," he said at length, putting his hands under the tails of his long dressing-gown of flowered cashmere. "Some soup and wine—hot ; and put her to bed."

"Is she then to remain for the night ?" Koosje asked, a little surprised.

"Oh, don't send me away !" the golden-haired girl broke out, in a voice that was positively a wail, and clasping a pair of pretty, slender hands in piteous supplication.

"Where do you come from?" the old gentleman asked, much as if he expected she might suddenly jump up and bite him.

"From Beijerland, Mynheer," she answered, with a sob.

"So ! Koosje, she is remarkably well dressed, is she not ?" the Professor said, glancing at the costly lace head-gear, the heavy gold head-piece, which lay on a table together with the great gold spiral ornaments and filigree pendants—a dazzling heap of richness. He looked too at the girl's white hands, at the rich crape-laden gown, at her delicate beauty, and shower of waving golden hair, which, released from the confinement of the cap and head-piece, flowed in a rich mass of glittering beauty over the pillows which his servants had placed beneath her head.

The Professor was old—the Professor was wholly given up to his profession which he jokingly called his wife, and his Stradivari which he jokingly called his sweetheart ; and though he cut half his acquaintances in the street through inattention and the shortness of his sight, he had eyes in his head, and upon occasion could use them. He therefore repeated his question.

"Very well dressed indeed, Professor," returned Koosje promptly.

"And what are you doing in Utrecht—in such a plight as this, too?" he asked, still keeping at a safe distance.

"Oh, Mynheer, I am all alone in the world," she answered, her blue misty eyes filled with tears. "I had a month ago a dear good kind father, but he has died, and I am indeed desolate. I always believed him rich, and to these things," with a gesture that included her dress and the ornaments on the table, "I have ever been accustomed. Thus, I ordered without consideration such clothes as I thought needful. And then I found there was nothing for me, not a hundred guilders to call my own, when all was paid."

"But what brought you to Utrecht?"

"He sent me here, Mynheer. In his last illness, only of three days' duration, he bade me gather all together and come to this city, where I was to ask for a *Mevrouw Baake*—his cousin."

"*Mevrouw Baake* of the *Sigaren Fabriek*," said *Dortje*, in an aside to the others. "I lived servant with her before I came here."

"I had heard very little about her, only my father had sometimes mentioned his cousin to me; they had once been betrothed," the stranger continued. "But when I reached Utrecht I found she was dead—two years dead. But we had never heard of it."

"Dear, dear, dear!" exclaimed the Professor pityingly. "Well, you had better let *Koosje* put you to bed, and we will see what can be done for you in the morning."

"Am I to make up a bed?" *Koosje* asked, following him along the passage.

The Professor wheeled round and faced her.

"She had better sleep in the guest-room," he said thoughtfully, regardless of the cold, which struck to his slippered feet from the marble floor. "That is the only room which does not contain specimens, that would probably frighten the poor child. I am very much afraid,

Koosje," he concluded, doubtfully, "that she is a lady; and what we are to do with a lady, I can't think."

With that, the old gentleman shuffled off to his cosy room, and Koosje turned back to her kitchen.

"He'll never think of marrying her," mused Koosje, rather blankly. If she had spoken her thoughts to the Professor himself, she would have received a very emphatic assurance, that much as the study of osteology and the Stradivari had blinded him to the affairs of this work-a-day world, he was not yet so thoroughly foolish as to join his fossilized wisdom to the ignorance of a child of sixteen or seventeen.

However, on the morrow matters assumed a somewhat different aspect. Gertruide van Floote proved to be not exactly a gentlewoman. It is true that her father had been a well-to-do man for his station in life, and had very much spoiled and indulged his one motherless child. Yet her education was so slight, that she could do little more than read and write, besides speaking a little English, which she had picked up from the yachtsmen frequenting her native town. The Professor found she had been but a distant relative of the *Mevrouw Baake*, to seek whom she had come to Utrecht, and that she had no kinsfolk upon whom she could depend—a fact which accounted for the profusion of her jewellery, all her golden trinkets having descended to her as heirlooms.

"I can be your servant, *Mynheer*," she suggested. "Indeed, I am a very useful girl, as you will find, if you will but try me."

Now, as a rule, the Professor vigorously set his face against admitting young servants into his house. They broke his china, they disarranged his bones, they meddled with his papers and made general havoc. So, in truth, he was not very willing to have Gertruide van Floote as a permanent member of his household, and he said so.

But Koosje had taken a fancy to the girl, and having an eye to her own departure at no very distant date—for she

had been betrothed more than two years—she pleaded so hard to keep her, promising to train her in all the Professor's ways, to teach her the value of old china and osteologic specimens, that eventually, with a good deal of grumbling, the old gentleman gave way ; and being a wise as well as an old gentleman, went back to his studies, dismissing Koosje and the girl alike from his thoughts.

Just at first Truide, poor child, was charmed.

She put away her splendid ornaments, and some lilac frocks and black skirts were purchased for her. Her box, which she had left at the station, supplied all that was necessary for Sunday.

It was great fun ! For a whole week this young person danced about the rambling old house, playing at being a servant. Then she began to grow a little weary of it all. She had been accustomed, of course, to performing such offices as all Dutch ladies fulfil : the care of china, of linen, the dusting of rooms, and the like ; but she had done them as a mistress, not as an underling. And that was not the worst ; it was when it came to her pretty feet having to be thrust into *klompen*, and her having to take a pail and syringe and mop and clean the windows, and the pathway, and front of the house, that the game of maidservant began to assume a very different aspect. When, after having been as free as air to come and go as she chose, she was only permitted to attend service on Sundays, and to take an hour's promenade afterwards with Dortje, who was dull, and heavy, and stupid, she began to feel positively desperate, and the result of it all was that when Jan van der Welde came, as he was accustomed to do nearly every evening, to see Koosje, Miss Truide, from sheer longing for excitement and change, began to make eyes at him, with what effect I will endeavour to show.

Just at first Koosje noticed nothing. She herself was of so faithful a nature, that an idea, a suspicion of Jan's falsehood never entered her mind. When the girl laughed and blushed, and dimpled and smiled, when she cast her great



blue eyes at the big young fellow, Koosje only thought how pretty she was, and that it was just a thousand pities she had not been born a great lady.

And thus weeks slipped over. Never very demonstrative herself, Koosje saw nothing. Dortje, for her part, saw a good deal ; but Dortje was a woman of few words, one who quite believed in the saying, " If speech is silver, silence is gold ;" so she held her peace.

Now Truide, rendered fairly frantic by her enforced confinement to the house, grew to look upon Jan as her only chance of excitement and distraction ; and Jan, poor thick-headed noodle of six feet high, was thoroughly wretched. What to do he knew not. A strange, mad, fierce passion for Truide had taken possession of him, and an utter distaste, almost dislike, had come in the place of the old love for Koosje. Truide was unlike anything he had ever come in contact with before ; she was so fairy-like, so light, so delicate, so dainty. Against Koosje's plumper, maturer charms, she appeared to the infatuated young man like—if he had ever heard of it, he would probably have said like a Dresden china image ; but since he had not, he compared her in his own foolish heart to an angel. Her feet were so tiny, her hands so soft, her eyes so expressive, her waist so slim, her manner so bewitching. Somehow Koosje was altogether different ; he could not endure the touch of her heavy hand, the tones of her less-refined voice ; he grew impatient at the denser perceptions of her mind. It was very foolish, very short-sighted ; for the hands, though heavy, were clever and willing—the voice, though a trifle coarser in accent than Truide's childish tones, would never tell him a lie—the perceptions, though not brilliant, were the perceptions of good everyday common-sense. It really was very foolish, for what charmed him most in Truide was the merest outside polish, a certain ease of manner which doubtless she had caught from the English aristocrats whom she had known in her native place. She had not half the sterling good qualities and steadfastness of Koosje ; but Jan

was in love, and did not stop to argue the matter as you or I are able to do. Men in love—very wise and great men too—are often like Jan van der Welde. They lay aside *pro tem.* the whole amount, be it great or small, of wisdom they possess. And it must be remembered that Jan van der Welde was neither a wise nor a great man.

Well, in the end there came what the French call *un dénouement*—what we in forcible modern English would call a *smash*—and it happened thus. It was one evening toward the summer that Koosje's eyes were suddenly opened, and she became aware of the free-and-easy familiarity of Truide's manner towards her betrothed lover, Jan. It was some very slight and trivial thing that led her to notice it, but in an instant the whole truth flashed across her mind.

"Leave the kitchen!" she said, in a tone of authority.

But it happened that, at the very instant she spoke, Jan was furtively holding Truide's fingers under cover of the table-cloth; and when, on hearing the sharp words, the girl would have snatched them away, he, with the true masculine instinct of opposition, held them fast.

"What do you mean by speaking to her like that?" he demanded, an angry flush overspreading his dark face.

"What is the maid to you?" Koosje asked, indignantly.

"Maybe more than you are," he retorted, in answer to which Koosje deliberately marched out of the kitchen, leaving them alone.

To say she was indignant, would be but very mildly to express the state of her feelings—she was *furious*. She knew that the end of her romance had come. No thought of making friends with Jan entered her mind—only a great storm filled her heart, till it was ready to burst with pain and anguish.

As she went along the passage the Professor's bell sounded, and Koosje, being close to the door, went abruptly in. The Professor looked up in mild astonishment, quickly enough changed to dismay as he caught sight of his valued

Koosje's face, from out which anger seemed in a moment to have thrust all the bright comely beauty.

"How now, my good Koosje?" said the old gentleman. "Is aught amiss?"

"Yes, Professor; there is," returned Koosje, all in a blaze of anger, and moving, as she spoke, the tea-tray, which she set down upon the oaken buffet with a bang, which made its rare and delicate freight fairly jingle again.

"But you needn't break my china, Koosje," suggested the old gentleman mildly, rising from his chair and getting into his favourite attitude before the stove.

"You are quite right, Professor," returned Koosje curtly—she was sensible even in her trouble.

"And what is the trouble?" he asked gently.

"It is just this, Professor," cried Koosje, setting her arms akimbo and speaking in a high-pitched, shrill voice: "you and I have been warming a viper in our bosoms, and, viper-like, she has turned round and bitten me."

"Is it Truide?"

"Truide," she affirmed disdainfully. "Yes, it is Truide, who, but for me, would be dead now of hunger and cold—or *worse*. And she has been making love to that great fool, Jan van der Welde—great oaf that he is—after all I have done for her—after my dragging her in out of the cold and the rain—after all I have taught her—ah, Professor, but it is a vile venomous viper that we have been warming in our bosoms!"

"I must beg, Koosje," said the old gentleman sedately, "that you will exonerate me from any such proceeding. If you remember rightly, I was altogether against your plan for keeping her in the house;" he could not resist giving her that little dig, kind of heart as he was.

"Serves me right for being so soft-hearted!" thundered Koosje. "I'll be wiser next time I fall over a bundle, and leave it where I find it."

"No, no, Koosje; don't say that," the old gentleman remonstrated gently. "After all, it may be but a blessing,

in disguise. God sends all our trials for some good and wise purpose. Our heaviest afflictions are often, nay, most times, Koosje, means to some great end, which, while the cloud of adversity hangs over us, we are unable to discern."

"Ah!" sniffed Koosje scornfully.

"This oaf—as I must say you justly term him, for you are a good and a clever woman, Koosje, as I can testify after the experience of years—has proved that he can be false; he has shown that he can throw away substance for shadow (for, of a truth, that poor, pretty child would make a sad wife for a poor man); yet, it is better you should know it now than at some future date, when—when there might be other ties to make the knowledge more bitter to you."

"Yes—that is true," said Koosje, passing the back of her hand across her trembling lips. She could not shed tears over her trouble—her eyes were dry and burning, as if anger had scorched the blessed drops ere they could fall. She went on washing up the cups and saucers, or at least *the* cup and saucer and the other articles the Professor had used for his tea; and after a few moments' silence he spoke again.

"What are you going to do? Punish her, or turn her out, or what?"

"I shall let him—*marry* her," replied Koosje, with a portentous nod.

The old gentleman couldn't help laughing. "You think he will pay off your old scores?"

"Before long," answered Koosje grimly, "she will find him out—as I have done."

Then, having finished washing the tea-things, which the Professor had shuddered to behold in her angry hands, she whirled herself out of the room, and left him alone.

"Oh these women—these women!" he cried in confidence to the pictures and the skeletons. "What a worry they are! An old bachelor has the best of it in the main, I do believe. But oh, Jan van der Welde, what a donkey

you must be to get yourself mixed up in such a broil ! and yet—ah !”

The fossilized old gentleman broke off with a sigh as he recalled the memory of a certain dead and gone romance, which had happened—goodness only knows how many years before, when he, like Jan van der Welde, would have thrown the world away for the glance of a certain pair of blue eyes, at the bidding of a certain English tongue, whose broken *Nederlandsche taal* was to him the sweetest music ever heard on earth—sweeter even than the strains of the Stradivari, when from under his skilful fingers rose the perfect melodies of old masters. Aye, but the sweet eyes had been closed in death many a long, long year—the sweet voice hushed in silence. He had watched the dear life ebb away—the fire in the blue eyes fade out. He had felt each day that the clasp of the little greeting fingers was less close ; each day he had seen the outline of the face grow sharper ; and at last there had come one when the poor little Englishwoman met him with the gaze of one who knew him not, and babbled, not of green fields, but of horses and dogs, and of a brother Jack who, five years before, had gone down with his Majesty’s ship *Alligator*, in mid-Atlantic.

Aye, but that was many and many a year ago. His young blue-eyed love stood out alone in his life’s history, a thing apart. Of the gentler sex, in a general way, the old Professor had not seen that which had raised it in his estimation to the level of the one woman over whose memory hung a bright halo of romance.

\* \* \* \* \*

Fifteen years had passed away ; the old Professor of Osteology had passed away with them, and in the large house on the Domplein lived a baron, with half a dozen noisy, happy, healthy children—young Fraulas and Jonkhcers—who scampered up and down the marble passages, and fell headlong from top to bottom of the steep, narrow,

unlighted stairways, to the immediate danger of dislocating their aristocratic little necks. There was a new race of neat maids, clad in the same neat livery of lilac and black, who scoured and cleaned, just as Koosje and Dortje had done in the old Professor's day. You might indeed have heard the self-same names resounding through the echoing rooms, "Koos—je! Dort—je!"

But the Koosje and the Dortje were not the same. What had become of Dortje, I cannot say; but on the left-hand side of the busy, bustling, picturesque Oude Gracht, there was a handsome shop filled with all manner of cakes, sweeties, confectioneries, and liqueurs—from absinthe to Benedictine, or arrack to Chartreuse! In that shop was a handsome, prosperous, middle-aged woman, well-dressed and well-mannered, no longer Professor van Dijck's Koosje, but the Jevrouw van Kampen.

Yes; Koosje had come to be a prosperous tradeswoman of good position, respected by all. But she was Koosje van Kampen still—the romance which had come to so disastrous and abrupt an end, had sufficed for her life. Many an offer had been made to her, it is true; but she had always declared that she had had enough of lovers—she had found out their real value.

I must tell you that at the time of Jan's infidelity, after the first flush of her rage was over, Koosje disdained to show any sign of grief or regret. She was very proud, this Netherlandish servant-maid, far too proud to let those by whom she was surrounded imagine she was wearing the willow for the faithless Jan; and when Dortje, on the day of the wedding, remarked that for her part she had always considered Koosje remarkably cool on the subject of matrimony, Koosje, with a careless out-turning of her hands palm uppermost, answered that she was right.

Very soon after their marriage, Jan and his young wife left Utrecht for Arnheim, where Jan had promise of higher wages; and thus they passed, as Koosje thought, completely out of her life.

"I don't wish to hear anything more about them, if—you—please," she said severely and emphatically to Dortje.

But not so. In time the Professor died, leaving Koosje the large legacy with which she set up the handsome shop in the Oude Gracht ; and several years passed on.

It happened one day that Koosje was sitting in her shop sewing. In the large inner room a party of ladies and officers were eating cakes and drinking chocolate and liqueurs, with a good deal of fun and laughter, when the door was opened timidly, thereby letting in a gust of bitter wind, and a woman crept fearfully in, followed by two small crying children.

Could the good lady give her something to eat ? she asked ; they had had nothing during the day, and the little ones were almost famished.

Koosje, who was very charitable, lifted a tray of large plain buns, and was about to give her some, when her eyes fell upon the poor beggar's faded face, and she exclaimed :

"Truide !"

Truide, for it was she, looked up in startled surprise.

"I did not know, or I would not have come in, Koosje," she said humbly, "for I treated you very badly "

"Ve—ry bad—ly," returned Koosje emphatically. "Then where is Jan ?"

"Dead !" murmured Truide sadly.

"Dead ! so—ah well ! I suppose I must do something for you. Here, Yankje !" opening a door and calling "Yankje !"

"Je, Jevrouw," a voice cried in reply.

The next moment a maid came running into the shop.

"Take these people into the kitchen, and give them something to eat. Put them by the stove whilst you prepare it. There is some soup and that smoked ham we had for *koffij*. Then come here and take my place for awhile."

"Je, Jevrouw," said Yankje, disappearing again, followed by Truide and her children.

Then Koosje sat down again and began to think.

"I said," she mused presently, "*that* night, that the next time I fell over a bundle, I'd leave it where I found it. Ah well! I'm not a barbarian—I couldn't do that. I never thought, though, it would be Truide."

"Hi, Jevrouw!" was called from the inner room.

"Je, Mynheer," jumping up and going to her customers.

She attended to their wants, and presently bowed them out.

"I never thought it would be Truide," she repeated to herself, as she closed the door behind the last of the gay uniforms and jingling scabbards. "And Jan is dead—ah well!"

Then she went into the kitchen where the miserable children—girls both of them, and pretty, had they been clean and less forlornly clad—were playing about the stove.

"So Jan is dead," began Koosje, seating herself.

"Yes; Jan is dead," Truide answered.

"And he left you with nothing?" Koosje asked.

"We had had nothing for a long time," Truide replied in her sad, crushed voice. "We didn't get on very well; he soon got tired of me."

"That was a weakness of his," remarked Koosje drily.

"We lost five little ones—one after another," Truide continued. "And Jan was fond of them, and somehow it seemed to sour him. As for me, I was sorry enough at the time, heaven knows, but it was as well. But Jan said it seemed as if a curse had fallen upon us; he began to wish for you back again, and to blame me for having come between you. And then he took to *Genever*, and then to wish for something stronger, so at last every stiver went for absinthe; and once or twice he beat me, and then he died."

"Just as well," muttered Koosje, under her breath.

"It is very good of you to have fed and warmed us," Truide went on, in her faint, complaining tones. "Many a one would have let me starve, and I should have deserved



it. It's very good of you, and we are grateful ; but 'tis time we were going, Koosje and Mina ;" then added, with a sad shake of her head, "but I don't know where."

"Oh, you'd better stay," said Koosje hurriedly. "I live in this big house by myself, and I dare say you'll be more useful in the shop than Yankje—if your tongue is as glib as it used to be, that is. You know some English, too, don't you ?"

"A little," Truide answered eagerly.

"And after all," Koosje said, philosophically shrugging her shoulders, "you saved me from the beatings, and the starvings, and the rest. I owe you something for that. Why, if it hadn't been for you, I should have been silly enough to have married him."

And then she went back to her shop, saying to herself :

"The Professor said it was a blessing in disguise—God sends all our trials to work some great purpose. Yes ; that was what he said, and he knew most things. Just think if I were trailing about now, with those two little ones ; with nothing to look back to but a schnap-drinking husband who beat me. Ah well—well ! Things are best as they are. I don't know that I ought not to be very much obliged to her—and she'll be very useful in the shop."

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## SCAMP!

### CHAPTER I.

"SUCH a pretty girl!" said Joe Carew to Jack Stewart, speaking of a lady who had just passed the window of the Blankhampton Club—the *gentlemen's* club, as its members were particular to call it.

"Ye-es—of the pussy-cat type," Jack answered, slightly.

"Rather like the pussy-cat type, myself," Carew asserted, for the sake of argument.

"Do you? What! when they show their claws and bite the hand that strokes them?" cried Jack. "Do you? Ah well, *I* don't. No! give me a woman with eyes like a pure-bred colley, with all the colley's grace and strength and elegance—his strong affections—all his unswerving, splendid fidelity and—and—oh, dash it all! take your tame pussy-cat, and keep her, but give me the colley instead!"

"A colley is just about the most uncertain-tempered, treacherous beast in creation!" Carew retorted; "never two minutes in the same mind. And I'll tell you what it is, Jack, old man: you're getting positively poetic—grace, strength, elegance, strong affections, fidelity—why, man alive, nothing short of a heroine will do for you! You'll have to remain in single blessedness all your days, unless you lower your tune considerably."

"Not I!" Jack laughed

"You never met a woman the least little bit like the one you've been describing," Carew asserted.

"But I shall," confidently.

"And then?"

"And then—oh, I shall marry her, of course."

"Carew looked up from the depths of his big chair, with an expression of intense amusement on his sunburnt face.

"I suppose you'll just ask her first, won't you?" he said seriously, yet smiling under his black moustache.

"Ask her!" Jack echoed. "Yes; I shall ask her, of course. The woman I should make a heroine of wouldn't be one at all likely to ask me."

"And supposing she says 'no'—what then, Jack?" Carew inquired slyly.

Stewart looked positively startled.

"Supposing—she—says—'NO'!" he repeated slowly. "Why"—all in a hurry, as if a bright thought had suddenly occurred to him—"why, I should ask her again, to be sure. If she was worth asking the first time, depend upon it she would be worth asking the second."

"And supposing she says 'no' to the second time of asking?" Carew suggested.

"Then I'd be all the better pleased to get her when she said 'yes' to the third," returned Jack, with a gay laugh. "Well, I'm going into Ferguson's to look at that brown cob he mentioned yesterday. Will you come?"

"No, thanks. I've got a business engagement with old Drumboy at the bank."

"Oh, have you? By-by, then."

Carew turned his head to watch his friend and comrade leave the room, then turned it again to watch him pass with long swinging steps down the street.

"That fellow'll never ask a woman twice to marry him," he thought. "I should say half of once asking will be enough for any woman. What a splendid unspoilt old chap it is, and what delicious ideas of t'other sex he has even yet! Ah! well, well, he'll change all those one of these

fine days, see if he don't. And for the meantime, they amuse him harmlessly."

Then Mr. Joe Carew, with a sigh to the memory of a certain pair of blue, blue eyes that had played what he called "the very deuce and all" with his affections, and had then quietly given themselves to somebody else, took up his paper and studied the news until it was time for him to go and keep his business appointment with old Drumboy at the bank.

In the meantime Jack Stewart went on his pleasant way down Blankhampton High Street, his handsome blonde head still full of his heroine—the ideal woman he had never yet met with in real life; but of whom he dreamt now and then, who was to come to him some day and be mistress of the old cradle of the Stewarts—the lovely old place away in the North, known as Langholme—a tall, gracious lady, with proud eyes, with a certain haughty dignity of manner, with a certain imperiousness of gesture—a woman with a brilliant gift of speech—a woman who should inspire universal admiration, yet admiration that should be mingled with respect—a woman with whom familiarity should never, not even with him, breed contempt.

And yet Jack Stewart added an amendment to the act already passed in the parliament consisting of the "Lords" of his affections and the "Commons" of his good sense, an amendment which very materially altered the disposition of the ideal lady who was one day to be the mother of the Stewarts and the mistress of his heart. The proud eyes were always to be tender and sweet to him—to be upon occasion coaxing—to be ever brimful of deepest love. The haughty dignity of manner must always melt into tenderness and gentleness for him. The imperious gestures should only accompany such terms as, "*Don't* stay away from me long." "*Come back to me soon.*" The brilliant gift of speech should not be above such simple phrases as, "*I do love you, Jack, indeed I do;*" or, "*Oh, Jack dear how glorious it is for us to be quite alone!*"

So absorbed in his dream was he, that as he passed along the thronged street he never saw at least half a dozen ladies who looked at him—well, as ladies do look when they are prepared to bow to a man who does not see them. Jack perceived none of them ; there was one plump little brunette, with a pair of soft black eyes shining from under a heavy fringe of silky hair, with whom he had danced and flirted in an unconscionable manner only three evenings before, of whom he had begged, with what certainly looked like a very eager light in his blue eyes, a flower or a glove, and had carried off both. She, of a truth, did think it odd that that handsome Mr. Stewart never saw her—after all the protestations he made, too.

She had lain awake all night thinking about him, and she went on her way that winter afternoon realizing that it had all meant nothing ; it had been but mere flirtation. She felt a little sore that it was so, and her heart was beating a good deal faster than she would have liked anybody but herself to know.

Jack did not notice her any more than he had noticed the others ; to tell the truth, he would not have been sorry if he had been told ten minutes later how he had missed her. He had been not a little uneasy respecting that very young woman. On the morning following the Bachelors' Ball, he had opened his eyes with a feeling that something had happened, and, as he collected his senses, the feeling resolved itself into something rather different ; in short, that he had made a complete fool of himself. He wasn't exactly sure how, but he had an idea that a little Miss Vane or Fane, or some such name (the little brunette's real cognomen was Stamer, but Jack had forgotten), was possessed of a plump little person and a pair of big soft eyes, that, combined, had very nearly betrayed him into begging they might belong to him for the term of one of their natural lives.

The feeling grew into one of positive alarm when, having dressed, he passed into his sitting-room (for at Blankhamp-

ton, as at Colchester, each officer had two little rooms to call his own), and found lying on the chimney-shelf an assortment of ball-room trophies, an assortment such as brought his heart nearly into his mouth with fright. There was a slightly-spoiled pink glove, with twelve buttons and a frill of lace at the top—genuine old point it was, too; but to do Jack justice he was woefully ignorant on such matters though Miss Stamer herself could have told him she would have to wear but a gross imitation at the next dance, or go without. There was a ball-programme only half-filled with names, yet of those appeared that of Miss Stamer—Miss S., Miss S., so many times that he had not the heart to count them; and besides, there was a regular bouquet of withered flowers, still exquisitely fragrant—wax-like stephanotis and gardenias. Ugh! Just then Batters appeared with his morning cup of tea and a covered plate of toast; so Jack, with a smothered groan, flung the whole concern into the fire—old point and all. Poor little Miss Stamer! She had fondly hoped the old point was put out to good interest, to be returned ere long in the shape of family diamonds and the magic circlet of gold which was to make her the mistress of Langholme. If she could but have seen the holocaust! but then, you see, she could not, and perhaps it was as well.

For two whole days Jack walked about feeling a little ashamed of himself, but still in a very self-congratulatory frame of mind that he had retained sufficient sense to pull up where he did, without committing himself any further. He rather believed—at least, that was how he put it to himself—that he had kissed Miss Stamer more times than once; and as he thought matters over with a pipe, and tried to recall precisely what had taken place, he rather believed that she had not raised any objection to the proceeding.

“Little baggage!” Jack said out aloud, as he knocked the ashes out against the bar of the grate, and poked a piece of blazing coal back into the fireplace with his slippered foot. “Little baggage, I wonder how many

fellows she's carried on that game with? Gad! she took to it like a young duck takes to water—little baggage!"

Most assuredly Miss Effie Stamer was not the realization of the ideal lady who was one day in the future to be the ruling spirit at Langholme; so, after all, it was just as well that he had passed her in the High Street, without being in the least aware that she was within a mile of him.

His reverie lasted until he reached the archway leading into the Repository, where hung out one Ferguson, a personage who did pretty nearly all the business in horse-flesh that was done round about that grandest of hunting-centres, Blankhampton. It was there, in that unromantic spot, that his reverie came to a sudden and unexpected end; for behold! towards him, out of the winter's gloom, there came the realization of all his dreams—his heroine—the ideal he was to ask once—twice—thrice—thirty times, if need be, to take the kingdom of his heart and his fortune, and rule them with a sceptre of love for ever.

The realization of all his dreams! She passed him by with scarcely a look—indeed, as if he had not been there—she, the woman of whom he had thought so often, and for whom he had been looking so long. When I say with scarcely a look, I mean that her eyes just rested on him for a moment, but without any change whatever in their expression; then glanced away, as if Jack had not been there at all, and they had encountered, instead of his handsome, interested face, nothing more attractive than the dingy rick wall of the entrance to the Repository.

Jack, who suddenly felt as if he had known her all his life, and that she had belonged to him always, fairly gasped as he passed her; then turned on his heel to look after her. At last he went on his way with a feeling of disappointment, vexed that, after all, he had no more idea what she was like than that she had a pair of great brown eyes, so big and so dark that they fairly dazzled him; and a tall, erect figure, clad in a tightly-fitting, yellowish ulster; while on

the waves and braids of her hair rested a little cap of the same material.

"Who is that lady, Ferguson?" Jack said to the horse-dealer.

"I'm sure I can't tell you, Mr. Stewart," he answered. "That's Mr. Broome she's with."

"His daughter?" said Jack carelessly.

"Oh no. He's not married. Had a let-down many a long year ago—many a long year ago."

"What kind of a let-down?"

"A disappointment. He was engaged to a young lady—the prettiest little, soft-voiced piece of wax-work alive—and she made a clean bolt of it the night before the wedding-day, and never was heard of again. Her people were satisfied, though, that she went of her own free will. Mr. Broome was a young man then—about your age, sir—but he never was quite the same after."

"I should think not," Jack answered, thinking the while of the tall girl's dazzling brown eyes. "And how do you happen to know all about it, Ferguson? Does everyone know about it?"

"Oh dear, no. Mr. Broome and I come from the same village—about ten miles from here. I don't suppose anyone in Blankhampton remembers much about it—if they ever knew, for the matter of that. The whole affair was hushed up as much as possible at the time."

"Oh, I see. Then you think the young lady is no relation?"

"I think not. Any way, she called him Mr. Broome more than once. Perhaps he's going to marry her."

"To do what?" echoed Jack sharply,

"To marry her, I said, Mr. Stewart," rejoined Ferguson, with a laugh.

"Pooh, nonsense!" the young man returned, in utter disdain. "Why, he's old enough to be her grandfather."

"Mr. Broome's just sixty," Ferguson informed him.



"Sixty !" From Jack's disgusted tone Mr. Broome's age might have been a hundred and sixty.

"Well, sir, old gentlemen do sometimes console themselves for past troubles with a young wife ; and young ladies—more's the pity—do sometimes go in for old gentlemen with plenty of money. As to this one, she's an uncommon fine, well-spoken young lady—seems an out-and-out judge of a horse for a female—and desperately keen after dogs. She's bought King, my big mastiff. I didn't want to sell him ; I'd no thought of doing so ; but she over-persuaded me, and made such a fuss about him, I had to give in."

"Did you hear her name ?"

"No, I did not, sir—not her surname, that is. Mr. Broome called her Scamp—an outlandish kind of name for a lady, it seemed to me."

Scamp ! Jack Stewart walked into the nearest stable, with a sudden sensation creeping up and down and all over him that he could not define ! Scamp ! if anyone had suggested the word to him an hour earlier as a fit and proper name for a lady, he would have said unhesitatingly that the bearer and the giver of it must alike be semi-idiotie.

Yet after that one uninterested glance of those big brown eyes, he realized all at once that Scamp, as a lady's pet name, was simply the most musical, the most coquettish, the most dainty, that was known upon earth. It is absolutely marvellous what a difference circumstances make in the cases of most people—the circumstance that Miss Scamp, whatever her name was, had looked for one instant into Jack Stewart's blue eyes, made, in his case, just all the difference in the world.

## CHAPTER II.

"I SAY, Carew," said Jack, going into his friend's quarters a couple of hours later, "did you ever know or hear of a man called Broome!"

"Never heard of him," answered Carew, with decision. "Why, what about him?"

"Oh, nothing in particular. He was looking at some horses at Ferguson's, that was all," Jack replied carelessly.

"Did you buy the brown cob?"

"Yes, I did. I fancy he'll be a thoroughly useful animal," Jack answered, wondering how he should manage to scrape acquaintance with Mr. Broome, and through him with the tall girl with the big brown eyes and the yellow-brown hair, who rejoiced in the name of Scamp!

However, as it happened, he did not find the desired acquaintance very difficult to make. A few evenings later he met her at a dinner-party in the neighbourhood, and, to his immense satisfaction, was requested by his hostess to take her in to dinner.

He lost no time. Before the evening was over he had learnt pretty nearly everything about her that there was to learn. Her mother was a widow, the widow of a clergyman, and her father had been Mr. Broome's most intimate friend. Mr. Broome, indeed, was her godfather. They lived a short way from Southampton, three or four miles; indeed, they had enough money to live comfortably; in fact, Miss Aileen Adair—yes, that was her name, quite a poetry name, as she remarked—was sufficiently explicit as to mention the sum their income was about: it was about six hundred a year. They lived very quietly, keeping two maids and a man. They had a splendid tennis-ground, and her mother drove a Norwich car, while she rode a horse of which Mr. Broome had made her a present a couple of years before.

At the conventional hour Jack Stewart went out of that

house with his head in a whirl, his heart beating at twice its normal speed, and his mind made up, that he would win Aileen Adair for his wife if he waited ten years before he accomplished that end.

Not that Jack Stewart had the faintest ghost of an idea of waiting even as many months. Before three weeks had passed he put the question to her, quite expecting she would say, "Yes, if you please: and thank you," after the most approved pussy-cat style; and feeling somehow as if the world had suddenly turned upside down—his world, that is—when Miss Adair did nothing of the kind.

Not that she refused him—oh dear, no—but she just laughed till the tears stood in her big eyes, and chaffed him so unmercifully that he began to feel, in a crestfallen kind of way, as if he had done something especially foolish.

"You and I get married!" Miss Adair cried, with a laugh. "What a joke! Pray, Mr. Stewart, do you usually go in for buying your pigs in such very thick pokes?"

"You are not a pig," asserted Jack indignantly

"I sincerely hope not," laughing again. "I was speaking metaphorically, of course."

"I would rather you wouldn't speak in metaphor, then," returned Jack. "And as to your being in a poke, literally or metaphorically—why, the idea is simply absurd."

"Mr. Stewart," said Scamp, with a great assumption of gravity, "I ask you, what *do* you know about me?"

"Everything," he asserted valiantly.

"Oh, indeed! And do you know what I like for dinner?"

"Well, I did notice that you took a good spoonful of sea-kale last night," Jack replied modestly.

Scamp laughed yet more.

'Sea-kale. Well, and what else do I take good spoonfuls of?"

"Oh, I don't know. What difference does that make? Of course you may always have what you like best for dinner, or anything else."

"You do not know what I like for dinner—you admit it," she said, looking at him with her big, bright brown eyes. "Well—I like—best of—anything—*raw onions*."

Involuntarily Jack made a wry face.

"I don't believe it," he said doughtily.

The laughter bubbled up to the girl's lips, but she went on with admirable gravity.

"We will let the dinner question pass. Do you know what my religious views are?"

"I tell you I don't care," he answered vexedly.

"Then I tell you, you—you ought to be ashamed of yourself. That shows you don't *really* care anything about me!"

Jack fairly groaned.

"Will you have me or not?" he demanded impatiently.

"I don't think it would be wise; you are evidently very headstrong—very indifferent to anything but the merest outside qualities."

"Oh!" with a great sigh. "Don't be hard upon me, Scamp. I love you, and I want you to love me—is not that all that can be wished? What do I care what you like for dinners? and as for your religious views, why, I don't care what they are either. I am sure you are everything that is good, whatever your 'views' may be. I don't care if you are a Plymouth Brother, or a follower of Joanna Southcott—if you are either, I'll turn so too. But if you will only love me a little, you will make me so awfully happy, Scamp, you can't think!"

"Do you believe," said Scamp, with the utmost gravity, "that a marriage would be likely to turn out well where the wife only loved her husband a little?"

"Then love me a great deal," he returned promptly.

"I have known you just three weeks," she reminded him.

"Well, is not that enough? I adored you in as many hours. Shall I wait three weeks more, and ask you again?"

Do you think you will love me any better then?" he demanded.

"How can I tell what the state of my mind may be in three weeks' time?" she asked. "Do be reasonable!"

"May I ask you then, and see?"

"Oh yes, if you are in the same mind about it," she replied, very much as she might have done if he had asked for a dance three seasons hence.

Not being able to get any more definite answer from her, Jack Stewart betook himself back to barracks, and in anything but an enviable frame of mind. It had been all very well to protest that if the lady of his choice were to refuse him once, he should ask her again; and that if she refused him a second time, he should be all the better pleased when she said "yes" to the third: but when he came to a realization of the first stage of that interesting process, and Scamp would have next-to-nothing to say to him, he found it altogether a matter of very much less roseate hue.

"What's the matter, Jack?" said one of the fellows to him during the evening, noting his dejected air. "You look as if you'd lost your character."

"I've lost something very much worse than my character," returned Jack dolefully.

"The devil you have! Well, I'm uncommonly sorry for you. Try an extra glass of champagne—it's wonderful what a sustaining power that beverage possesses."

Jack told himself that all the champagne in the world would not be of the slightest benefit to him; however, he gave the remedy a fair trial, with the result of going to bed more than half-inclined to let Miss Adair—slide! And here I am using his language, not my own.

But when morning-light came to bear upon the subject, he found Miss Adair *wouldn't* slide—slide, not a bit of it! Oh no! the big brown eyes and the sweet smiling lips were still as persistently before him as they had been any time during the past four weeks.

"What's worth asking for once, is worth asking for

twice," remarked Jack to himself, as he sponged the remains of the lather off his face after shaving. "I'll not give in—after all, she didn't actually say 'no'; and dash it all, a man don't exactly want a wife who'll drop into his mouth like an over-ripe cherry!"

So he went headlong at the siege again, and fought right valiantly. It is true that Miss Adair would have very little to say to him—on the subject of matrimony, that is—and laughed more than ever at his efforts to make any impression upon her; but Jack was not, on the whole, so much discouraged as he had been aforetime—principally because his divinity had permitted him to retain her hand in his own for full five minutes, while he expatiated on the extent of his adoration, and had then only taken it away because she wanted to scratch her nose.

After that he had great hopes, and each time that he found himself in her presence his love and admiration for her grew greater. He talked to her a great deal of Langholme—he sent a photographer there to take views of all the points of interest—and they were not a few; and when she graciously acknowledged that Langholme must certainly be lovely, "a place to be happy in"—Jack's words, not hers, she never said anything half so sentimental in her life—he felt time would give him all his desires, and that the big brown eyes and smooth, yellow-brown hair would before long give his ancestral home the one touch of beauty it required.

And at last Scamp accepted him—not with the faintest approach to spooniness, but, as she put it, really to get rid of his troublesome importunity. She stipulated for a year's engagement, during which time Jack was to teach her to love him.

Poor Jack! he had but a sorry time of it during the first three months. For a woman, Miss Adair had a wonderfully keen sense of humour. She saw everything in its most comic light, and from its most humorous point of view. No sooner did Jack's conversation or conduct border

on the sentimental—and it did so very often—than the corners of her mouth would give way, and the mischievous mirth would flood into her big eyes, until he, poor fellow, over head and ears in love, and terribly in earnest, did not dare to give her a kiss or to call her by any one of the thousand terms of endearment which rose to his lips whenever he addressed her.

“Scamp, if you won’t even give me a kiss now,” he remonstrated dismally one day, when the little imp of laughter enthroned in the girl’s mischievous eyes seemed all at once to have frozen him, “how will you——”

“I did not say you might not give me a kiss,” Scamp interrupted coolly.

“But you laughed at me,” in a very aggrieved tone.

“Was it laughed at? Poor, dear baby! then it shan’t be laughed at—that it shan’t,” in a soothing tone, as if he were a fractious infant, troubled with what is popularly called “teething.” “Did its nasty, disagreeable Scamps laugh at it then, a lartle honey!”

“Scamp!”

“Jack!” copying his tone.

“I think you are very unkind,” rising from his chair with unhappy dignity and stalking to the window, where he stood stonily staring at nothing.

“Un—kind!” Scamp echoed. “Well, of all the utterly contradictory, ungrateful, and unreasonable people I ever came across, recommend me to Mr. John Stewart of the 9th Dragoons. I call you by every endearing name I can think of——”

“When?”

“When? Why, just now, to be sure. Didn’t I call you a lartle honey?”

“A lartle honey!” contemptuously.

“An old-fashioned, rather countrified term, dear, but singularly soft-sounding and expressive. Then did I not offer to give you a kiss?”

“WHEN?”

"Why, just now, of course. Why not? I'd as soon kiss you as Pug there; and I often kiss him, as you must see for yourself."

"Oh yes, I do! though why you should want to kiss a wheezy beast of a dog in preference to me, Heaven only knows."

"Well, you see, Pug is never cross; Pug does not mind *how* much I laugh," she began, when Jack interrupted her passionately.

"Oh, Scamp, my darling, why do you torture me so? What is the good of making me miserable? Only tell me you really do love me, and I won't mind how much you laugh."

Unfortunately Scamp began to laugh again, and Jack went off into a greater storm of doubting passion than ever. But at last she agreed to give him a kiss by way of proving that she really did care something about him, and that the laughter was nothing but fun, and meant nothing else.

Poor Jack! It was such a kiss. She screwed up her eyes and nose and mouth into a thousand creases, like a child with a wholesome horror of yellow soap. Jack declined to avail himself of the offered opportunity, and went out of the house in a regular rage, without so much as going through the form of saying good-bye, whereat that wicked Scamp laughed longer and more mischievously than ever.

And Jack went to barracks in such a towering rage, that he even went the length of writing a formal, very formal, letter, resigning all claim to Miss Adair's hand, and subscribing it,

"I have the honour to be,

"Your obedient servant,

"JOHN STEWART."

It was a very serious epistle, for he pointed out that she evidently cared nothing for him, but found him merely an



object of ridicule, and that he had come to the conclusion that a marriage between them would not have a chance of proving conducive to their mutual comfort and happiness.

But Scamp never saw that letter, for the very good reason that Jack never sent it. When the post-corporal was ready to take the bag, Jack thought it would be as well to sleep on the matter; and by the time morning arrived Scamp was in the ascendancy, rage was nowhere, and Jack had a dozen excuses ready to extenuate the conduct which twelve hours previously he had termed heartless, and to exalt it from careless unkindness into sweet maidenly modesty.

So the game was played on, and weeks slipped by. Scamp laughed more gaily, and Jack fell deeper and deeper in love; and then a *billet-doux* was received in Blankhampton Barracks which stifled the laughter, and turned the love for a time to despair—a *billet-doux* the gist of which was orders to embark for South Africa within forty-eight hours.

### CHAPTER III.

I HAVE not explained, as I ought to have done, that during all this time Mrs. and Miss Adair were staying with Mr. Broome and his sister. Such, however, was the case. They frequently paid these long visits at Friar's Lodge, for Mrs. Adair and Miss Broome had been close friends from childhood, and Mr. Broome liked to have his old friend's daughter about him whenever he could.

Almost every afternoon, unless Scamp happened to be in Blankhampton, Jack Stewart was accustomed to ride over, Mr. Broome's house being about five miles from the town. It was therefore with some surprise that the family, who had not yet left the luncheon-table, saw him ride past the dining-room windows fully an hour and a half before his usual time, his horse in a lather, and news of importance as plainly stamped upon his face as if it had been written there with pen and ink.

"Why, Stewart, you are early to day!" Mr. Broome exclaimed, when he entered.

"Yes, I am, Mr. Broome," he answered. "Scamp, will you come into the drawing-room for a minute? I want to speak to you."

Scamp rose without a word, and followed him out of the room; her heart was beating furiously, and she feared she knew not what.

"What is it, Jack?" she asked.

Jack drew her into the drawing-room, and closed the door.

"I've got to go away and leave you, Scamp," he blurted out.

"To—go—away—and leave me," Scamp echoed, half-laughing. "Why, what in the world have I done now?"

"Done? Nothing, of course. What could you *ever* do that would drive me away from you?" he asked passionately.

"But you are going away?" never guessing at the truth.

"My duty bids me go, Scamp."

"Jack!" knowing all at once what he meant. "It is *not* foreign service?"

"It is South Africa," Jack answered, "and we are off this evening."

He thought, in his heart, that she did not care very much, and so he troubled her with none of the doubting questions she had laughed at so persistently during three months—questions which, just then, would have been absolute torment to her. Besides, he had many things to tell her and very little time to tell them in, for there was still much to be done, and many matters of outfit to be procured before the regiment should march out of Blankhampton Barracks.

His small stock of personal jewellery he had brought with him to leave in her care—a valuable watch and chain,

a set of diamond studs, and a set of sapphires, three or four rings, and as many breast-pins.

"I shall buy a silver watch and chain as I go through the town," he told her. "If I should happen to be killed—and it's not in the least improbable—it's no good enriching those Zulu brutes more than one can help."

"No," said Scamp, in a frozen voice.

Something in the tone caused him to look at her, and something in the face made him ask a question, or rather, make an assertion.

"Oh, Scamp!" he cried. "I believe you do really care—a little."

"*A little!*" Scamp repeated. "Oh, my Jack!"

Nearly a year passed before Jack Stewart returned to the land of his birth; and when he did so, it was with a heavy, heavy heart, that would fain have kept him in Africa.

A very short time before the battle of Ulundi, he had been grievously wounded—in truth, he had been within an ace of losing his life, and it was only by the cool, determined, unyielding pluck of a brother officer—Joe Carew, by-the-bye—who had pulled him on to his horse when half a dozen Zulus were fast pressing on them, and the blood was pouring down over Jack's eyes so that he could not see where he was and hardly knew what he was doing. Twice he missed the stirrup, but Joe pulled him up at last, with a savage determination that the Zulus should not have his friend, dead or alive—and so he saved him.

Carew was to have the Cross, and Jack had thanked him with his lips, while in his heart he wished many and many a time that Joe had left him to his fate, and that a respectable gazette had been issued—*vice John Stewart, killed in action.*

My readers will infer from this that Scamp had proved traitor. Not a bit of it. By every mail there came long and bright letters, detailing every scrap of London and Blankhampton gossip she could pick up; and if they con-

tained no spooniness from beginning to end, they invariably wound up in a way which, to a man who knew her as well as Jack Stewart did, ought to have been eminently satisfactory.

"God bless you, my Jack! I pray for your safety every day."

But the matter was just this: Jack wasn't satisfied. In spite of numerous protestations to the contrary, he would have liked regular pussy-cat letters from Scamp, though a girl of the pussy-cat type would, in the first instance, have had no attraction for him whatever. The brilliant, cool, well-bred letters gave him the impression that she cared nothing at all about him, and quite did away with the impression made by her piteous exclamation of "Oh, my Jack!" which had comforted him so inexpressibly when they parted.

The longer he remained in Africa, the more the idea took hold of him, and the more dejected and miserable did he grow; until there came a day when he came slowly and painfully back to life, after many hours of insensibility, and made up his mind that he must give Scamp her freedom.

Fain would he have stayed in Africa, where he knew his sufferings would soon come to an end; but you see, military authorities don't always ask their invalids whether they will or they won't do what is good for them. Captain John Stewart was carried off, bag and baggage, by half a dozen stalwart soldiers, and popped on board a homeward bound steamer, without having his likes or dislikes on the subject consulted.

It was not, however, because he fancied Scamp cared very little about him that he resolved to give her up. I have said that previous to the fight at Ulundi he was seriously wounded, but I did not say that perhaps no man was ever so grievously wounded before. In the first place, he had had a bullet in his thigh, which had shattered the bone, and would make him limp for life—but that was as

nothing; a sword-cut—as was afterwards proved, a sword belonging to one of the ill-fated victims of the ever-to-be-lamented Isandula massacre—had laid open his face from temple to jaw, blinding an eye, breaking his handsome aquiline nose, and leaving a broad seam of flaming crimson right across the cheek, which had once been the fairest of complexion in the regiment.

Poor Jack! the first time—it was during that miserable homeward voyage—that he cajoled his servant into giving him a looking-glass, that he might see what manner of man he had come to be, from that moment he had given Aileen Adair up as completely as if she were dead.

“What woman would be willing to run the risk of sitting opposite to such a Mokanna as that for, it might be, thirty or forty years?” he muttered as he laid the glass down,

So, when he reached Netley, he told the surgeon under whose especial care he was, and with whom he struck up a tremendous friendship, that if any people came to see him, they were not to be let in.

“All right,” said the doctor, guessing something of his feelings. “Poor chap, it must have been a hard trial to have his face smashed in that way!” Dr. Gordon said to himself.

However, he was not a little surprised when, that very afternoon, a smart Norwich car containing two ladies, one of them young and fair to see, was driven up, and inquiries for Captain Stewart were made.

“Oh! I’ll go out myself,” he said to the orderly, who had come in with the message.

So he went out bareheaded, and Scamp took him captive by one single glance of her big eyes.

“Mr.—— I mean Captain Stewart has come,” she said. “Is he to be seen?”

Evidently, thought the doctor, she had no idea how bad matters were with him.

“I have orders to admit no visitors,” he answered,

wondering, as he regarded her, what the upshot of it all would be.

"Oh! from whom? Is he very ill? Too ill to see me?"

"He is very ill—very ill indeed."

"Too ill to be seen?"

"Well, no, I cannot say that; but he is excessively weak, and in wretchedly low spirits, and I have promised him that no visitors shall see him."

"That no visitors shall see him?" repeated Scamp, in the blankest possible tones. "Why, he must have *known* we should come the moment we heard of his arrival."

"You are his sister, perhaps?" said the doctor, knowing very well that she was nothing of the kind.

"Oh no; I am engaged to him." Then with a sudden gleam of humour shining through the blank distress on her face, she said: "We had better go away, mother; it is evident that Jack wants to be off it."

The doctor laughed outright.

"I expect the real truth is, he is afraid to let you see him," he told her.

"Why? He is not altered, is he?"

"Altered!" he echoed—he just stood and stared at her. "My dear lady, he is disfigured frightfully," he said, at length. "He told me this morning, so bitterly that I guessed there was a lady in the case, that he was good-looking once——"

"I should think he was," Scamp interrupted indignantly, "as handsome as anyone you ever saw."

"He is not good-looking now," said the surgeon pitifully.

"Jack not good-looking!" Scamp cried. "Well, Mr.—oh! Gordon, thanks—well, Mr. Gordon, I think you had better break your promise and show me the way to his room. I'll take the blame, and make it all right for you. Is he in bed, or up—or what? Can he get about?"

"Not as yet; he is on a sofa. He might move about as far as the wounds in his head are concerned; but un-

fortunately, poor fellow, he has had a ball in his hip, which will make him limp for the rest of his life."

Miss Adair uttered a cry of dismay.

"I can't think of Jack like that," she said, dashing the tears resolutely away from her eyes.

"So Captain Stewart seems to think," said the doctor drily.

Scamp looked aside at him, then threw the reins to the groom, and jumped out of the car.

"You'll show me the way, won't you?" she said to the doctor, in her most persuasive accents.

But the doctor was not inclined to have his patient distressed for nothing.

"Have you come to do him good?" he asked, gravely; "because otherwise I cannot let you see him."

"Mr. Gordon," said she, "look at me—look at me well. Do you think there is anything mean about me?"

"No, I don't; but you have no idea how disfigured——"

"Do you think I look like a cad——"

"Scamp!" interrupted her mother reproachfully; "my dear!"

"I couldn't help crying a little bit," the girl went on, upset by the reproachful tones; "because it is not a year since Jack went away the very picture of health and beauty too," with a defiant ring in her voice; "and it does seem hard he should come back——but there, I won't talk about it. I only say, if—*whatever* he may look like, if it made any difference in me, I should be a cad. Yes, mother, I will say the word, a *howling* cad—*there!*"

I am bound to own that a great big lump, very embarrassing and awkward, came into the doctor's throat. It very nearly choked him, when he made an effort, and swallowed it.

"You'll do," he said, admiringly; "come along."

He was very sorry for her, for he saw how little she realized the extent of the disfigurement from which Jack Stewart suffered. However, he led her into the hospital,

and, opening the door of a pleasant little room, stood aside that she might pass in alone.

For a moment the girl's heart positively stood still, as she saw the face that was turned towards her ; then by a mighty effort she pulled herself together, and said coolly :

"Well, upon my word, darling ! but they have made a mess of you—no mistake about it."

Jack turned his head away in silence, and Scamp crossed the room to his side, looking down with sad and pitying eyes upon the scarred cheek, down which great tears were fast streaming. She felt as if the doctor had been chaffing when he spoke of Jack as being frightfully disfigured. Disfigured ! why, he was changed and altered out of all recognition ; if she had met him in the street, she knew that she would have passed him by without recognition. She saw no resemblance to the Jack Stewart she had known.

Gaunt and weak and pale, with a short beard covering the lower part of his face, and that cruel scar—she couldn't bear to think of it when she recalled the splendid man, in the very flower of his youth, who had come back to her this pitiable wreck.

"Jack, have you nothing to say to me ?" she said, as he still kept his head turned from her.

"I told Gordon not to let you in," he replied, in a trembling voice.

"Ah"—and here she tried to laugh—"but you see, Jack, I made eyes at him, and he succumbed."

"Oh, of course, I might have expected it," very bitterly. "What chance would *my* face have against yours ?"

"Did you not want me to come ?"

"I wanted to spare you this," mistaking the passionate entreaty in her tone altogether.

"But I must have seen you sometime," she remonstrated.

"Not necessarily."

"Jack, *you can't* have seen anyone out there !" she cried, "Jack, you are *not* changed ?"



"Not changed," he echoed, turning his face to her again—"not changed! Oh, my God—*look* at me!"

In an instant Scamp—the teasing, distant, mischievous creature, who had almost worried his soul out of him—perched herself upon the arm of his chair, and, slipping her arm round his neck, laid her soft, young, blooming cheek against his burning, scarred face.

"My Jack," she said tenderly, "were you going to give me up because those miserable savages have spoilt your beauty? Did you think that would make me change?"

Jack tried to push her away.

"I will not be married for pity—I cannot bear it."

"Dear love," she said, in her soft, gentle voice, "there is no pity in the case—only love. You gave me your heart when your face was handsome—I never saw a handsomer—and your frame strong. Do you think I shall value your heart less because of your limp and your scarred face? My Jack, you know very little of women, and still less of your Scamp, when you believe such a thing possible."

"And you really love me, Scamp?" he cried. "I have thought all along that——"

"Then you had no business to think. I tell you I do—I do—I do—dearly—dearly—dearly! There, will that satisfy you? And here's the doctor, come to turn me out. Do you think I have done your patient good?"

"Yes; you have done him good—we shall soon be rid of him," he answered.

"I hope you will, for he must come to us to be nursed up," said Scamp, looking round with superb disdain. "I don't believe in nursing by wholesale, myself."

"Pray be civil, Scamp," put in Jack, who had recovered himself so far as to meet his future mother-in-law's kiss of greeting with a smile, "or Dr. Gordon will keep me here for a month longer, just to punish you."

"I'm sure I hope you won't!" cried Mrs. Adair, in feigned alarm. "I want to be at peace now that our hero has come back. The last year, my daughter has done

nothing but watch the gate for the postman and the newspapers—unless, indeed, she happened to be galloping into the town on the chance of there being a telegram.”

“When *I* was young,” observed Scamp, folding her hands primly, and looking at nothing, “I was taught that it was excessively mean to tell tales out of school.”

“I thought Jack might appreciate the compliment,” said her mother, laughing.

“Jack does,” said the invalid.

Then the doctor turned them out.

“He has had excitement enough,” he told Scamp, as they reached the open air once more.

“But we may come to-morrow?”

“Oh yes! You’ve done him no end of good, poor fellow; he’ll get well in no time, now.”

“I tried my best to keep her out,” he said to Jack, when he returned to his patient’s room, “but it was no use; she wouldn’t take no, so I had to give in.

Jack turned round smiling.

“Gordon,” he said, “isn’t she a darling?”

“Yes,” said Gordon, laughing.

“This morning there wasn’t a more miserable devil in the three kingdoms than I; now,” heaving a long sigh of satisfaction, “I would not change places with any king that ever sat upon a throne.”

It was a few weeks later that the gallant 9th came back to England. Jack Stewart and his wife, who were staying with Mrs. Adair, drove into Southampton to see them come in.

“There’s Carew,” said Jack, pointing with his whip.

“There’s poor old Jack with his scarred face,” said Carew to his next neighbour at the same moment. “How do you do, Mrs. Stewart? Many congratulations!”

“Thanks. Welcome home a thousand times; and as many thanks for sending me my husband safe back, and for all the care you took of him out there.”

"I wish I could have sent him home in a better state of preservation," looking up at his friend. "But he doesn't look nearly so bad as he did."

Scamp leant out of the little carriage, and gave the sun-burnt soldier's hand a grateful squeeze.

"Yes; they have spoilt his beauty-looks," she admitted; "but, you see, I was so thankful to get him back at all, that I never gave 'condition' a second thought."

Carew looked past her to Jack.

"Jack," he said solemnly, "I think you were quite right to prefer colleys to cats. A pussy-cat won't compare for a moment with a colley."

"Colleys—cats! What do you mean?" Scamp asked, wondering why Jack laughed so consciously. "Did anyone ever compare me to a cat?"

"Never in my hearing, Mrs. Stewart," said Carew, with a laugh, as he moved off.

"What does he mean, Jack?" she asked.

But Jack was graceless enough to declare that he hadn't the least idea.

## *A REGIMENTAL ÆSTHETE.*

"NEW sub comes to-day, I suppose."

"Yes. I shan't be sorry, for one. There'll be one more for that confounded duty. By-the-bye, what's his name? Does anyone know?" looking round the ante-room inquiringly.

"Smith," answered St. George, from the depths of a big chair and a newspaper.

"Smith!" repeated D'Arcy. "Oh!"

"Can't *all* be D'Arcys and St. Georges," observed Jerrards, laughing.

"Why, no, of course not," returned D'Arcy seriously. "I don't know that it would be desirable—must be some hewers of wood and drawers of water; only somehow they ought to keep out of a regiment, or at least go into the Line."

"Well, don't let the chief come in and hear you," put in Gordon. "We shall have him jawing on the subject for a month."

"No," cried D'Arcy, joining in the general laugh. "No use flaunting a red rag before a bull, particularly when the bull is mad on the subject of red rags, and you've no special reason for rousing him. It's an odd thing, though—a deuced odd thing," puffing out a great cloud of smoke and watching it mount slowly into the air, "that a man with such an utter absence of breed as the chief, should be

so ultra-select in his company. First thing when a fellow joins is, 'Is he in the Book?' By Jove! one might wear the book and all the gentry in it to ribbons before we should find any of *his* belongings therein."

"What are his belongings?" from behind the newspaper.

"Haven't the least idea," answered D'Arcy.

"Bristol he comes from," said Gordon.

"Oh, I'm told," put in Jerrards, "that his father's a fifth-rate attorney, who made a lot of money by usury—gentleman by Act of Parliament," with a great laugh at his own joke.

"Hallo! here's the youngster coming," exclaimed D'Arcy.

"One, two, three, four, five cabs! Good Lord! and a furniture-van. Now what the devil can he be bringing in a furniture-van."

"By George! there's another," cried Jerrards. "Does he expect he's going to have all the barracks to himself?"

The first cab, as he spoke, drew up to the door of the ante-room, whereupon several officers trooped out to inspect the new arrival.

He alighted immediately—a tall, limp youth, whose carrotty hair flowed in lank waves on either side of his head to his shoulders, whose large-featured, clean-shaven face was wan and sad, and of a chalk-like hue, under whose eyes were great hollow dark lines, which made the dark orbs blacker and more profoundly melancholy than probably they would have been had their owner looked alert and lively.

He wore a short velvet jacket, without buttons, and fastened at the throat by a double-jewelled clasp; he had a wide collar, like an exaggerated Eton boy with a bad laundress and a poor supply of starch; on his fingers were many and strange rings; on his left wrist a bracelet—a broad band of gold, bearing in raised and burnished old English characters this inscription—

*"For our Ladye of Pain,"*

On his untidy head was a huge felt hat, of the size, shape, and that degree of softness much affected by the masters of the earlier Flemish school of paintings, or by itinerant musicians of southern nationality in more modern days.

Thus the new subaltern presented himself to the astonished officers of the 9th Dragoons. They were astonished, certainly. As for D'Arcy—who, for cool cheek and unabashed impudence, was considered the show man of the regiment—he was thoroughly taken aback; he stood stock-still, staring at him, as if he had been suddenly frozen to ice—perhaps for the very first time in the whole course of his existence (five-and-twenty years of it), he was in the plight of being absolutely without anything to say for himself; in truth, he just stood and gaped as if he had been a chicken with the pip.

At last, however, having rubbed his eyes to make sure that he was awake and not dreaming, he did find his tongue, and blurted out:

“What the devil will the Colonel say?”

Hearing him speak, though he had evidently not caught the words, the tall, chalk-coloured youth addressed himself to him.

“Are you,” he said, in a voice like an echo of some mournful melody, “are you one of my future comrades-in-arms?”

One of the bystanders went off into a fit of laughter, but D'Arcy was too thoroughly astonished even to smile.

“My name is D'Arcy, and I am a lieutenant in the 9th Dragoons, if that's what you mean,” he said brusquely. “I suppose you're Mr. Smith?”

The mournful one passed a beringed hand across his eyes, and a spasm, I suppose of pain, flickered across his gaunt face.

“May I beg,” shivering slightly, “that you will give me my *full* name—as the greatest favour. Ah! thanks.”

“Heɣ?” said D'Arcy, puzzled, and beginning to get cross.

"My *full* name! Plantagenet de Montmorency-Smith—ah! thanks."

"Well, you'd better come into the ante-room, Mr. Plantagenet de Montmorency-Smith," put in Gordon, with a good-natured laugh, as he would have done if he had suddenly had a hopeless imbecile thrown on his hands. "You're just in time for lunch. Colonel Graves has gone home, so you cannot report yourself to him at present. The Major is hunting to-day."

"Ah! thanks," murmured the æsthetic imbecile feebly.

"But those cabs must be emptied," Gordon went on. "Bolton—hi—Bol—ton!"

"Yes, sir!" was responded from above, and immediately a servant came running from the officers' quarters.

"Do you know who is told off to Mr. Smith?"

"Yes, sir. Wilkins, sir, for the present."

"Then get those cabs cleared, and help him to take Mr. Smith's things up to his room. But—er—Smith, by-the-bye, what—er—I beg your pardon," for the youth had sent a quivering, despairing hand very nearly into Gordon's astonished face.

"My *full* name—the greatest favour—Plantagenet de Montmorency-Smith—ah! thanks."

"Oh! devil take your 'Plantagenet de Montmorency'!" muttered Gordon. "Well, Mis—ter Plant—ag—en—et—de—Montmor—eney—*Smith*—what have **you** got in those two furniture-vans?"

The youth waved his hands expansively.

"A few trifles of high art—some specimens of early Italian Pre-Raffaelite Renaissance——"

"Hey—WHAT?" burst out Jerrards, who was an artist of no mean order.

The untidy, carrotty head turned slowly towards him, and a pitying smile overspread the gaunt features.

"They are ART-terms, my brother," he said, with supreme but fine scorn. "Some future day I will endeavour to explain all the beauties——"

"O Lord!" ejaculated Jerrards blankly.

"Well, never mind that," put in Gordon, who wanted his lunch, instead of a disquisition on art, good, bad, or indifferent. "The question is, what is to be done with those vans? Are they full?"

"Quite so," answered P. de M.-Smith serenely. "Full of rare and priceless treasures—broidered stuffs from Mecca, portières from Cashmere, perfumes from Araby, enamels from Limoges, curios from the East, pottery——"

"Well, they'll soon get smashed among soldier-servants and railway-porters—that's one comfort," said Gordon unfeelingly. "But where are they to go for the present? You know you will only have one room here, fourteen feet by sixteen, if as large."

"Let the horses be yoked, and they can remain for the present. I must have chambers in the town," said the youth, with a superb air.

"Well, the Colonel 'll settle that question," said Gordon. "Then, Wilkins, just look after them, will you?"

"Yes, sir," answered Wilkins, who had been staring with all his eyes at his new master, and now went off sniggering audibly.

"Am I to be inflicted with a servant called Wilkins?" asked Mr. P. de M.-Smith plaintively. "My own servants are coming—Isidore will arrive with the remainder of my luggage shortly."

"Oh, Wilkins isn't a bad name," said St. George brusquely, speaking for the first time. "You'll soon get used to it. If not, there's the Honourable Reginald Gonerille in my troop—perhaps he'd suit you better—only here he's called Tom Brown, and I don't know that he would accept a post as servant."

"Ah! thanks."

St. George muttered something savagely about an idiot, with an adjective tacked on to the term, which I need not repeat—it was utterly thrown away on the melancholy youth, who had put himself into a three-cornered attitude



against the wall, while his sad eyes contemplated his new surroundings with a gaze so utterly and profoundly hopeless, that it would have touched the heart of anyone but a Philistine of a cavalry officer.

"Mr. Smith," said Gordon loudly, "won't you take your hat off, and come to the table?"

Mr. Smith cast his shapeless hat upon the ground.

"Pray pardon me—I was in a reverie," he said simply.

"Looks queerer without his hat than he does with it," muttered D'Arcy to Jerrards.

"Infinitely. I say, D'Arcy, he's taken all the shine out of you!"

"By Jove, you're right!" returned D'Arcy. "I never saw such a brute in my life; and I can't think what the devil the Colonel will say!"

"Not the usual 'Very glad to see you,'" Jerrards laughed. "By Jove, but I'll take care to be present at the meeting—I wouldn't miss it for a fiver!"

He certainly did look very queer without his hat. His carrotty hair was as thick as a mop—was parted precisely in the middle—coming down to his eyebrows and over his ears. He was leaning back in his chair, apparently lost in another reverie, out of which he roused himself with a slow coming back to life when he was distinctly addressed by one of the mess-waiters.

"It is but little I want," he said, waving him away. "I need it not, minion."

The man stared at him in speechless astonishment, and the youth continued:

"Give me some fair water."

"I shouldn't wonder if this don't turn the Colonel into a drivelling idiot," muttered D'Arcy confidently to Jerrards. "Only the other day Scott said shocks were bad for him. Depend upon it, he'll never get over this!"

"Won't you eat anything?" said Gordon to "the shock" at that moment.

"It is but little I want," answered he.

“ But I wants it reg’lar,  
And I wants it strong,”

said D’Arcy, all at once finding sufficient wit to quote and improvise at the same time.

“The shock” closed his eyes with a shudder of pain, in the midst of which Jerrards exclaimed :

“ There’s a couple more cabs coming.”

“ Isidore,” murmured “ the shock,” feebly.

“ Isidore’s a d——d sight smarter-looking chap than his master,” Jerrards said *sotto voce* to his neighbours.

A moment later a mess-waiter entered, and made a communication to Gordon.

“ Mr. Smith, sir, has come to join.”

Gordon rose and went into the ante-room with a puzzled face. “ The shock ” was deep in a reverie.

“ We’ve got one Mr. Smith,” they heard him say to the new arrival. “ Why, how d’you do ? You’re little Ted Smith of Chorley Manor—knew the face in a minute. Then, who the devil’s the other fellow ? ”

“ What’s he like ? I should look after the spoons, if I were you.”

“ Well, come in and have a look at him,” Gordon said cordially. “ Come in ; gentlemen, let me introduce Mr. Smith, new subaltern—old friend, and neighbour of mine.

There was a general greeting, except from “ the shock,” who did not look up, but was still sunk in his reverie.

“ By the way—Mis-ter—Plan-tag-e-net *de* Mont-mor-eney-Smith ! ”

“ My friend,” looking up dreamily.

“ I think you informed us you had come to join the 9th Dragoons.”

Not a muscle of the gaunt face moved ; the gaze of the melancholy eyes never wavered. At last he spoke.

“ Why, cert’n’ly,” he said, coolly.

There was a regular yell of laughter from every man round the table, waiters and all.

"It's Tottles," screamed Jerrards, snatching at the carroty wig.

"What an ass you are, Tottles!" cried one.

"What a splendid get-up!" laughed another.

"I think I took you in, you fellows," Tottles laughed. "It was an awful lot of trouble; but D'Arcy's face alone was worth all the bother. By George! it was inimitable when he blurted out, 'What the devil will the Colonel say? I'll be shot if he had a word to say for himself.'"

But D'Arcy's tongue had come back to him.

"I always thought you were rather good-looking, Tottles," he said coolly; "but without your moustache, and *with* a carrot-coloured wig, you're simply hideous."

"I believe I am," Tottles admitted; "but your face, my friend, was what the æsthetic people would describe as '*distinctly precious*.'"

THE END.

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